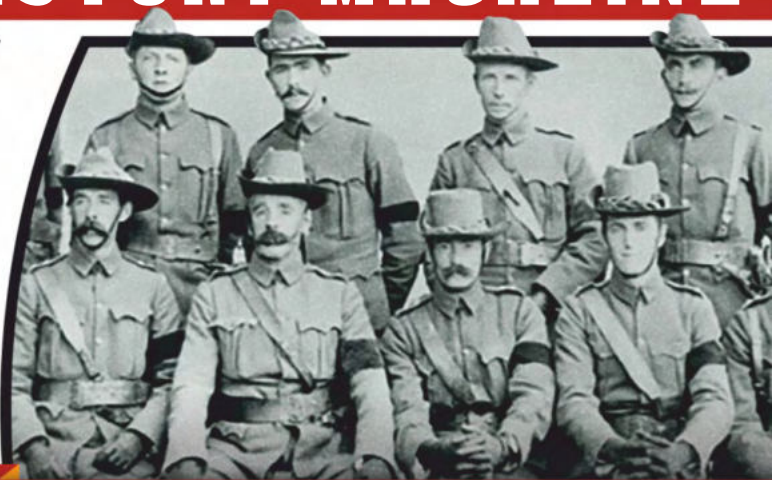


BRITAIN'S BEST MILITARY HISTORY MAGAZINE

# HISTORY *of* WAR



**TASMANIAN VC**

BOER WAR HEROISM

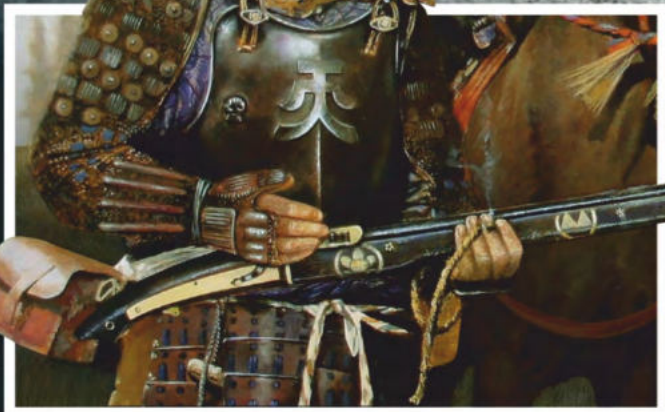
★★★★★  
**STALIN'S GREATEST GENERAL**

# ZHUKOV

UNCOVER THE ORIGINS OF THE GENIUS SOVIET STRATEGIST



  
**POLAND'S  
DIE-HARDS**  
INSIDE THE BATTLE  
OF HILL 262



**LAND OF THE RISING GUN**

How firearms changed samurai warfare



**FROM D-DAY TO DACHAU**

Exclusive interview with US veteran



**GARIBALDI'S CRUSADE**

Inside his battle for a united Italy

FUTURE

ISSUE 073





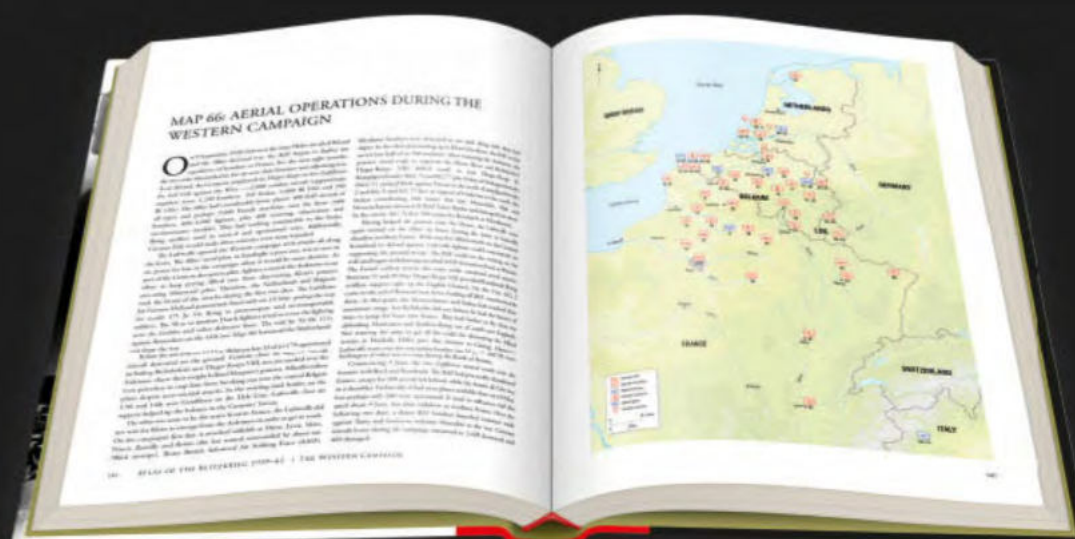
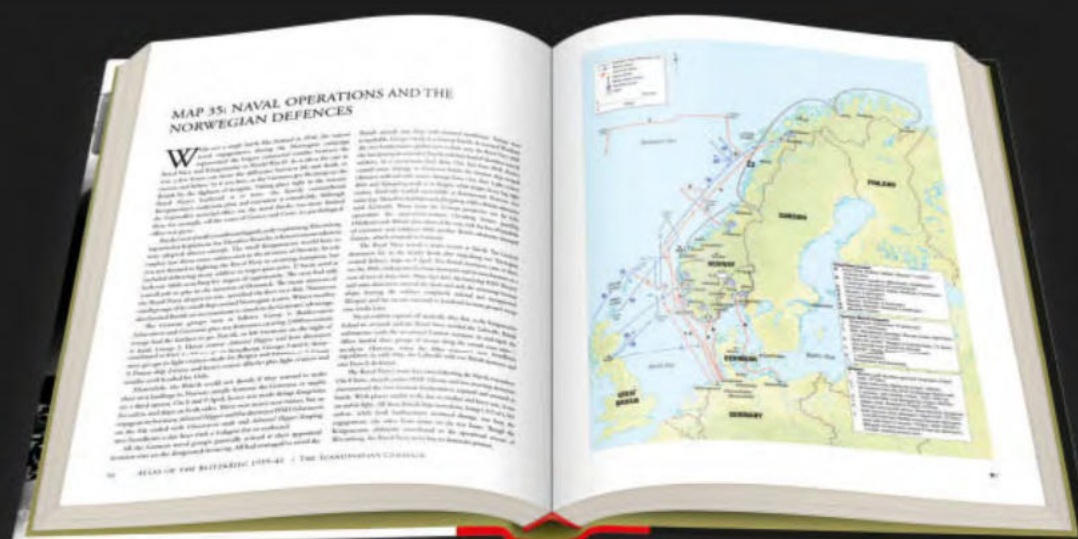
# ATLAS OF THE BLITZKRIEG 1939-41



A STUNNING CARTOGRAPHIC  
GUIDE TO THE INFAMOUS  
BLITZKRIEG CAMPAIGNS WHICH  
BROUGHT EUROPE TO ITS KNEES

Replete with nearly one hundred lavishly detailed maps, complemented by expert analysis, this impressive atlas documents every aspect of Nazi Germany's terrifying blitzkrieg campaigns, and as well as lesser-known offensives in Scandinavia and the Balkans, and the naval and air wars in Europe.

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PUBLISHING





*Soldiers of the 1st Army Group in an attack during the Battle of Khalkhin Gol*



# Welcome

**I**n September 1939, as the Nazi campaigns in Western Europe gained momentum, a remote but nonetheless consequential struggle was concluding in Mongolia. Beginning as a minor border skirmish, the Battles of Khalkhin Gol saw thousands of Japanese and Soviet infantry, armour and aircraft deployed along the vast grasslands surrounding the Khalkha River. Among the Soviet officers in charge was Corps Commander Georgy Zhukov, who would later take his experiences from Khalkhin Gol and apply them on the decisive Eastern Front against German divisions.

  
**Tim Williamson**  
 Editor-in-Chief



## CONTRIBUTORS

### TOM GARNER

Tom spoke with US veteran Pete Shaw. He shares his experiences fighting across Europe, from the beaches of Normandy, to the heart of the Reich (p.44). He also spoke with historian Antony Beevor about his new book (p.94).



### HARETH AL BUSTANI

New to the pages of History of War, Hareth is a journalist and historian with a passion for Japanese history. Over on page 36 he explores how the arrival of firearms to Japan radically changed the battlefields of the samurai.



### MARIANNA BUKOWSKI

Back with another gripping story of Polish WWII heroism, Marianna tackles the Great Battles with a blow-by-blow account of General Maczek's Armoured Division at Hill 262, during the Battle of the Falaise Pocket (p.62).





# ZHUKOV

## RISE OF STALIN'S GREATEST GENERAL

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The struggle to unite the Italian peninsula under one flag involved decades of bloody conflict

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One of the largest battles of the 19th century, this horrific encounter shocked the continent

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The Expedition of the Thousand was a risky attempt to unite the largest Italian kingdom

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Patriotic amateurs, as well as rank-and-file veterans of several nations fought in Italy

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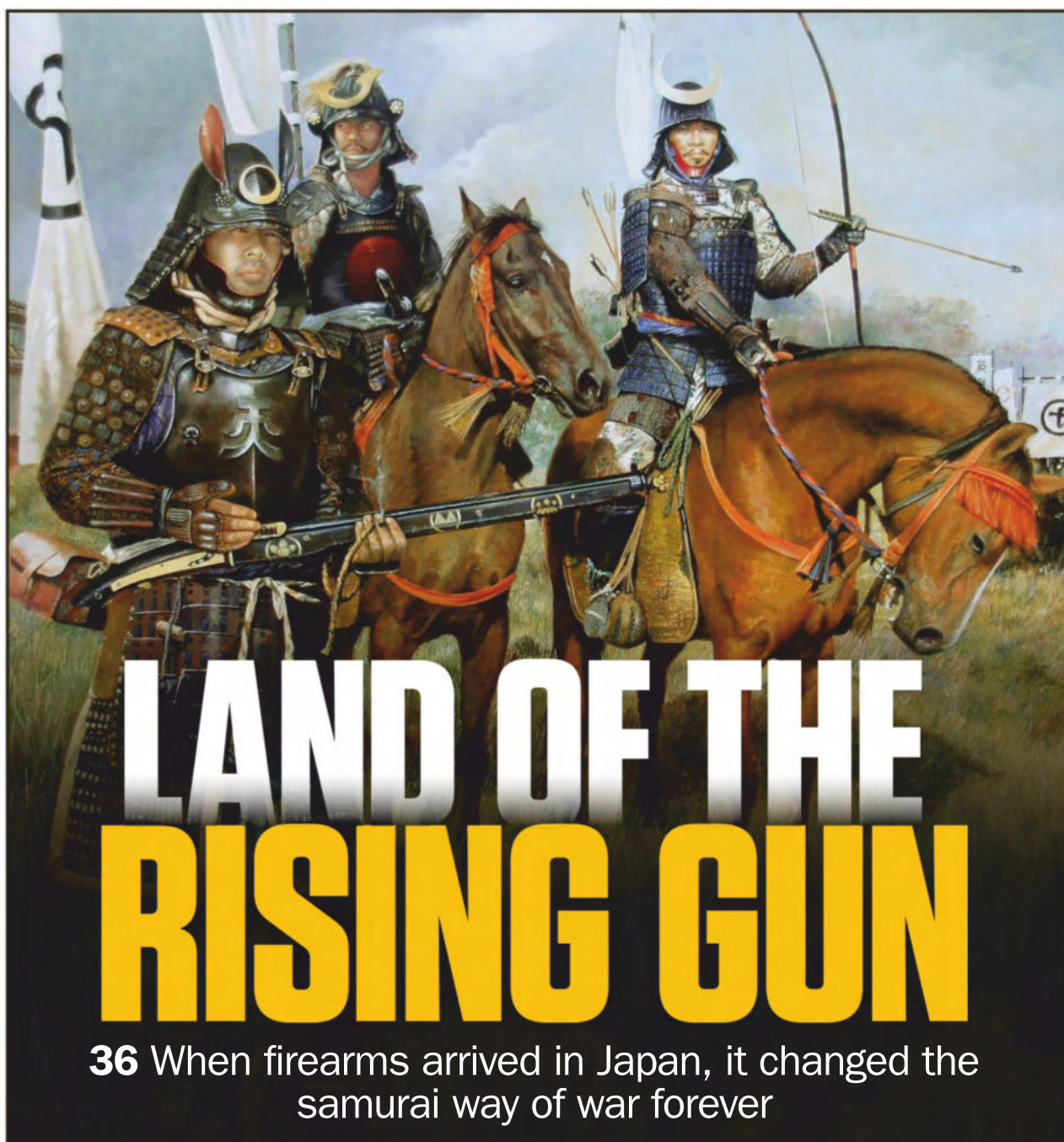
Europe's ruling class and ideological politicians all played their part in the campaigns



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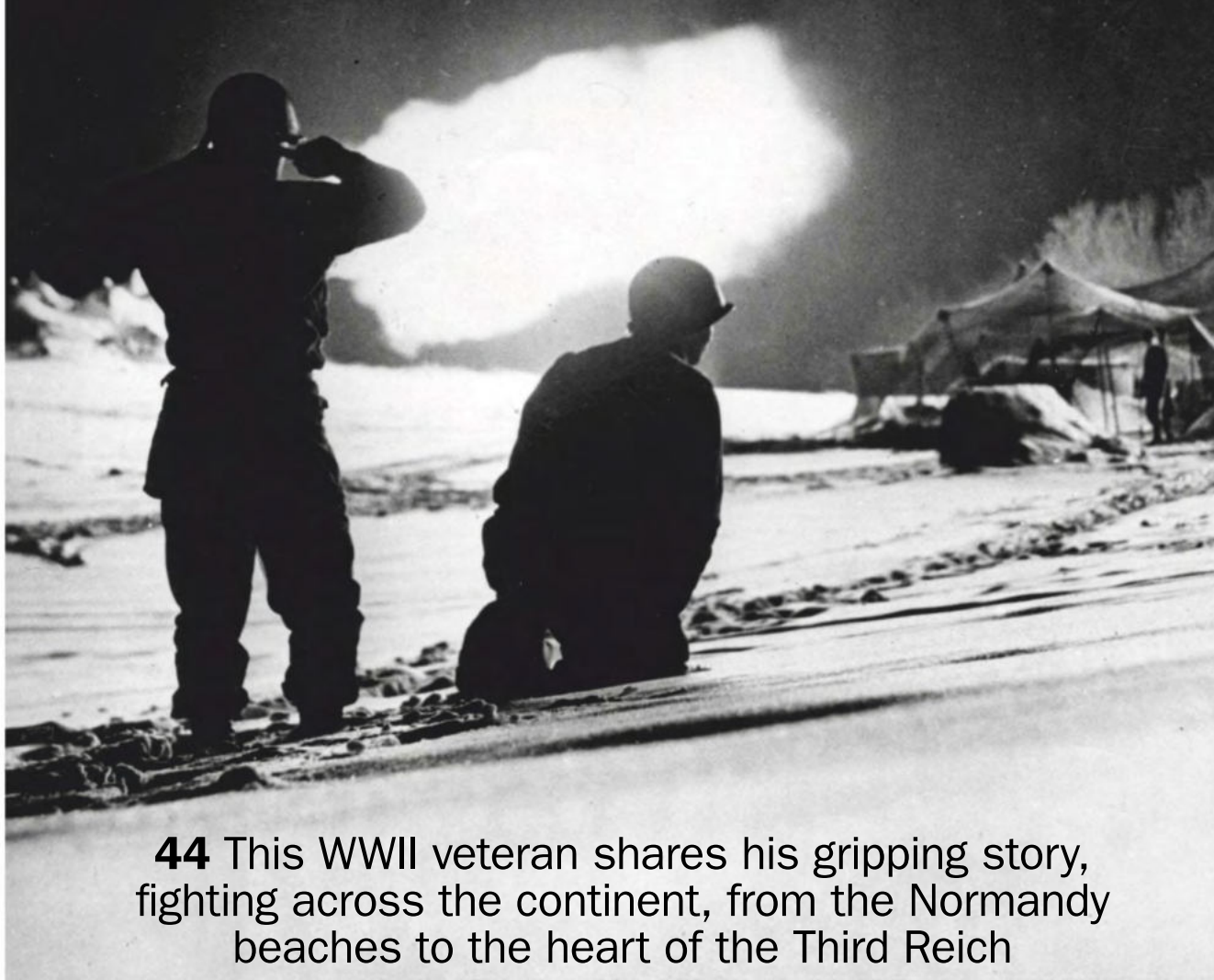
## LAND OF THE RISING GUN

**36** When firearms arrived in Japan, it changed the samurai way of war forever



# AN AMERICAN IN EUROPE

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**44** This WWII veteran shares his gripping story, fighting across the continent, from the Normandy beaches to the heart of the Third Reich

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# HILL 262



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This native of Tasmania joined the imperial forces and fought bravely in South Africa

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Inside this Soviet workhorse which still serves militaries around the world

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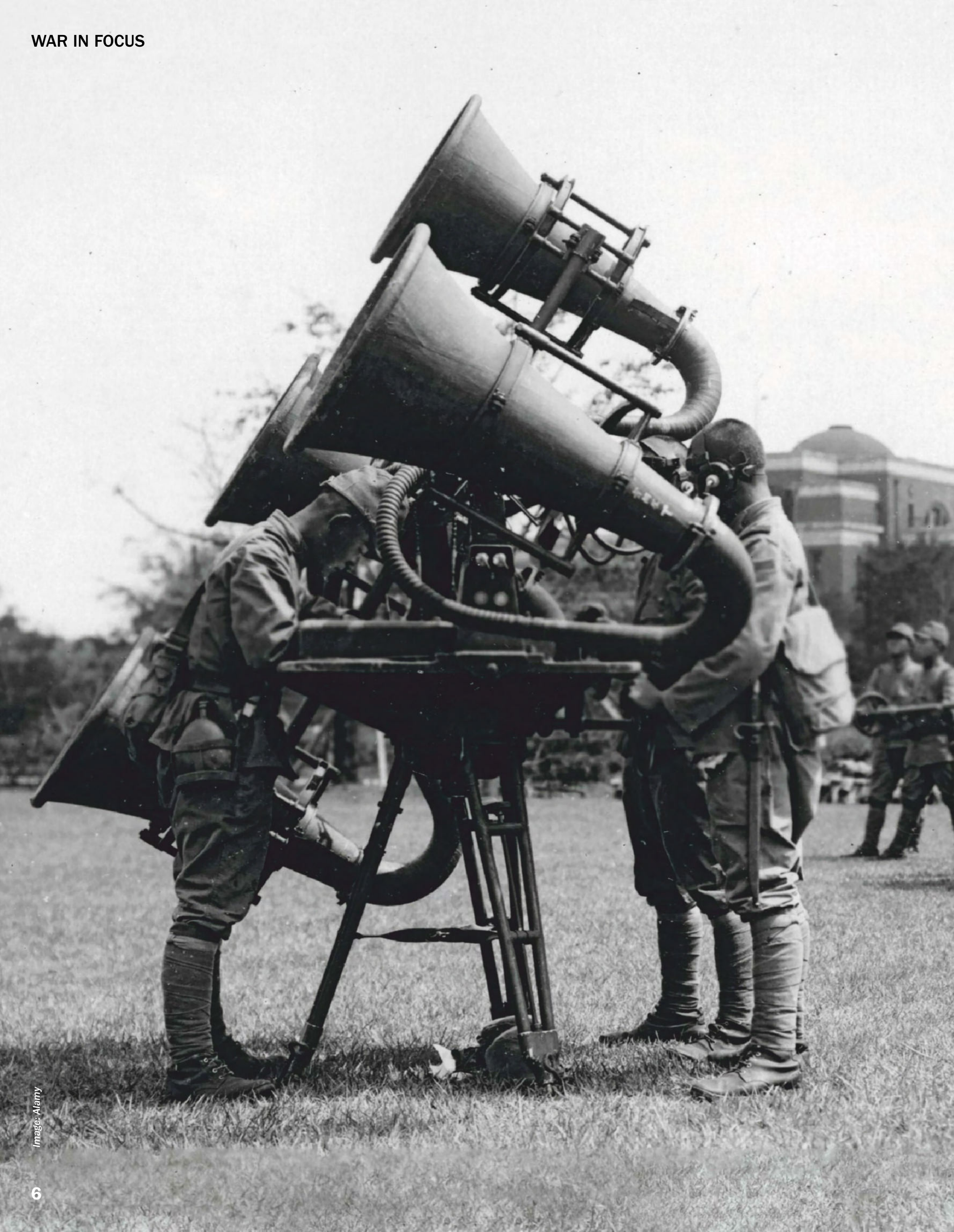
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A simple but sombre relic of an horrific weapon of war







# **WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS**

## **EARS SKYWARD**

*Taken: c. 1938*

Japanese anti-aircraft soldiers man acoustic locators close to Tokyo. Developed before the wider emergence of radar, these devices, also known as acoustic horns, were designed to detect the presence and location of enemy aircraft. Despite a range of variants being developed, combining multiple and even larger 'horns', the devices soon became obsolete.





# WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS

## DESERT LEGION

Taken: **September 2003**

A Legionnaire of the Spanish Legion on patrol in Diwaniya, Iraq, during the occupation of the country. One of the original supporters of the invasion, Spain deployed around 1,300 troops, including members of the Legion, in August 2003. However the following year forces were withdrawn after the war continued to face opposition with the Spanish population.











## **WAR<sub>in</sub> FOCUS**

### **WINNIE IN MOSCOW**

*Taken: October, 1944*

Winston Churchill is welcomed to Moscow by Vyacheslav Molotov, and a Red Army guard of honour. The Prime Minister was attending the Fourth Moscow Conference, at which he discussed the fate of Eastern Europe with Stalin. This became known as the 'Percentages Agreement', although there was no official American signatory present.










Image: Alamy





# **WAR<sup>in</sup> FOCUS**

## **ADVANCE IN HUÉ**

*Taken: 21 February, 1968*

American Marines advance down a street in the city of Hué, Vietnam, during the Tet Offensive. Thousands of concealed North Vietnamese soldiers attacked and occupied the city at the end of January, taking US forces totally by surprise. What ensued was a bloody struggle to retake Hué, but this resulted in thousands of civilian and military casualties.



## TIMELINE OF THE...

# ITALIAN WARS OF INDEPENDENCE

During the 19th century, revolutionaries fought intermittent, protracted conflicts that eventually resulted in 'Risorgimento': Italian unification

The 'Five Days of Milan' is a major event where rebellion breaks out against Austrian rule in the Lombard city between 18-22 March 1848

## 1848 REVOLUTIONS

Uprisings against reactionary Austrian and Two Sicilies control are led by the kingdoms of Sardinia-Piedmont, Lombardy-Venetia as well as the fledgling state of Sicily. These revolts take place as part of the wider Revolutions of 1848.

1815-30

## EARLY REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY

Influenced by Napoleon's rule as 'King of Italy', revolutionary groups such as the 'Carboneria' dream of unifying the Italian peninsula under a constitutional government. Insurrections separately occur in the kingdoms of the Two Sicilies and Sardinia-Piedmont.

Napoleon as king of Italy. The ideals of the French Revolution that the Napoleonic era engenders has a great bearing on the idea of Italian unification

## INSURRECTIONS

Eight states exist on the peninsula in 1830 and the July Revolution in France directly influences revolutionaries. Insurrections occur in Modena, the Papal Legations and the Duchy of Parma with plans to unite as the 'United Italian Provinces'. Pope Gregory XVI asks Austria to suppress the rebels and an Austrian army marches across Italy to crush resistance.

The Italian patriot *Ciro Menotti* is arrested by soldiers at his house. He is subsequently executed and becomes a martyr for the revolutionary cause



1830-31

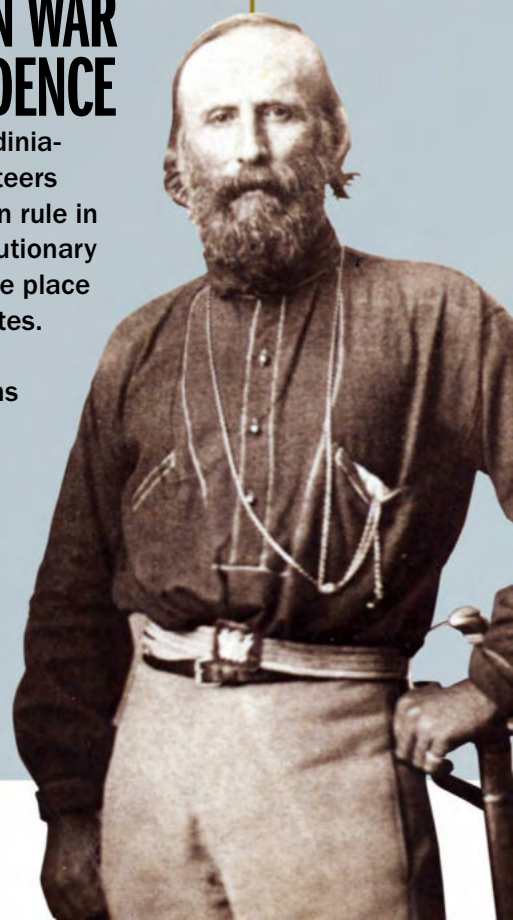
1848

23 March 1848-22 August 1849

## FIRST ITALIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

The Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont and volunteers fight against Austrian rule in northern Italy. Revolutionary movements also take place in various Italian states. The Austrians and traditional institutions win the war but the conflict marks the entrance to national prominence of Giuseppe Garibaldi.

Right: Giuseppe Garibaldi







## SECOND ITALIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

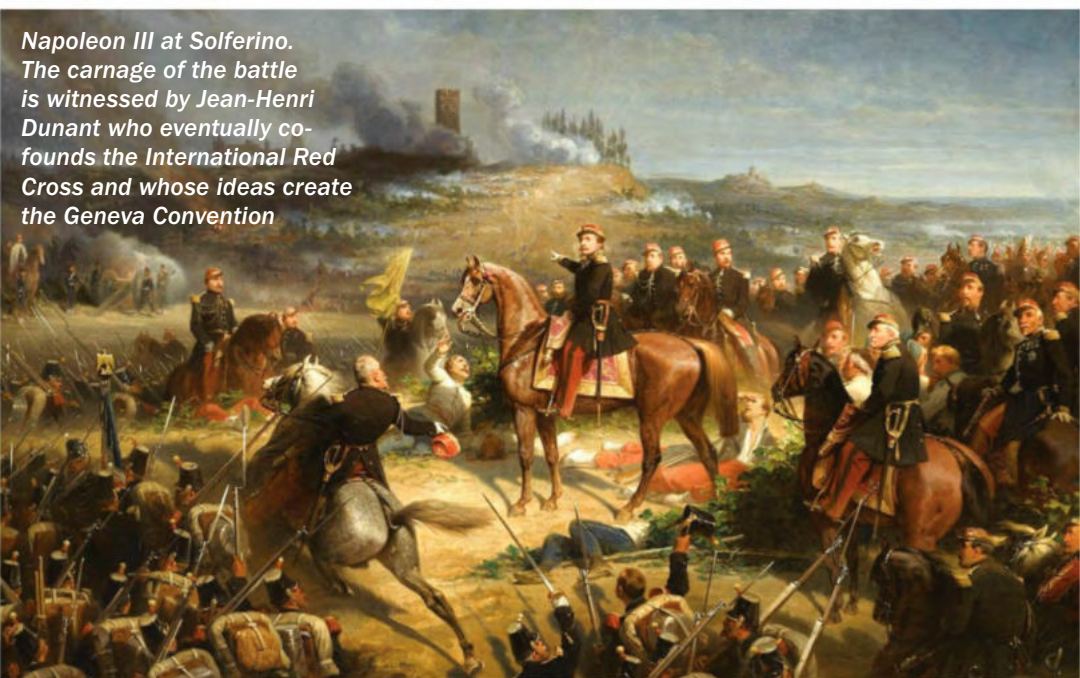
Napoleon III extensively supports Sardinia-Piedmont's plan of Italian unification against Austria in exchange for the transfer of Nice and Savoy to France. Combined French and Sardinian-Piedmontese forces as well as Garibaldi's 'Hunters of the Alps' defeat the Austrians. Sardinia-Piedmont annexes Lombardy and occupies Tuscany and Emilia.



Italian Camp at the Battle of Magenta by Giovanni Fattori 1859

## BATTLE OF SOLFERINO 02

Napoleon III and Victor Emmanuel II defeat Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria in the largest engagement since the Battle of Leipzig in 1813. Sardinia-Piedmont adds Lombardy to its territory and Solferino is the last battle in world history where all armies are commanded by monarchs.



Napoleon III at Solferino. The carnage of the battle is witnessed by Jean-Henri Dunant who eventually co-founds the International Red Cross and whose ideas create the Geneva Convention

22-23 March 1849

29 April-12 July 1859

24 June 1859

## BATTLE OF NOVARA 01

Austrian forces under Joseph Radetsky von Radetz decisively defeated the Sardinian-Piedmontese at Novara in Piedmont. The battle results in the abdication of King Charles Albert of Sardinia-Piedmont in favour of his son Victor Emmanuel II.

Cavalry charge at Novara







Inset maps: Rocio Espin

1860-61

1 October 1860



## EXPEDITION OF THE THOUSAND

Garibaldi launches an ambitious venture to conquer the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies with an initial force of only 1,000 men. Despite the odds, the expedition lands in Sicily, Garibaldi increases the numbers of his troops and wins the battles of Calatafimi and Milazzo. His gamble results in a significant Unification victory.

Garibaldi and the Expedition of the Thousand. Illustration from 1910

## BATTLE OF VOLTURNUS 03

Volturnus is the largest clash of the Expedition of the Thousand. Despite now commanding 24,000 men, Garibaldi is unable to decisively defeat Neapolitan forces of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Nevertheless, the kingdom is annexed to Sardinia-Piedmont only days later.

*Neapolitan troops recoil to the other side of the Ponte della Valle Aqueduct*





**BATTLE OF BEZZECCA 05**

Garibaldi defeats a numerically superior Austrian force as part of an invasion of Trentino. Italian artillery and infantry attacks force the Austrians to withdraw their emplacements in surrounding mountains, which results in few casualties.

*Garibaldi organises troops at Bezzecca despite being wounded in a previous engagement*



**“GARIBALDI DEFEATS A NUMERICALLY SUPERIOR AUSTRIAN FORCE AS PART OF AN INVASION OF TRENTINO”**

*Charge of the Genoa Cavalry at Custoza*



**THIRD ITALIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE**

After allying with Prussia, Italy wages war against Austria for control of Venetia. Italian campaigns against the Austrians initially falter but Prussian victories in Bohemia turn the war in Italy's favour. The resulting Treaty of Vienna cedes Venetia and Mantua to Italy.

17 March 1861 20 June-12 August 1866 20 July 1866 21 July 1866 20 September 1870

**CREATION OF THE KINGDOM OF ITALY**

Following Garibaldi's success, Victor Emmanuel II is proclaimed as the king of Italy by the parliament of the newly unified country. He is the first monarch of a united Italy since the 6th century. In the country at large, only Rome, Venetia and Trentino remain to be conquered.



*Victor Emmanuel II opens the first unified Italian parliament in Turin*

**BATTLE OF LISSA 04**

Austrian ships defeat a numerically superior Italian fleet in the Adriatic Sea. Although the battle has no effect on the outcome of the Third Italian War of Independence, it is technologically significant. Lissa is the first major sea battle between ironclads and one of the last to use deliberate ramming.



*Austrian and Italian ironclads clash en masse at Lissa*

**CAPTURE OF ROME 06**

The Papal States under Pope Pius IX are comprehensively defeated when the Italian Army conducts a short siege at Rome. The Leonine City, except the Vatican, is occupied and the event marks the full unification of Italy under Victor Emmanuel II.

*49 Italian soldiers and 19 Papal Zouaves are killed during the final battle in the capital of Italy*





Frontline

# FAMOUS BATTLE: SOLFERINO

The largest battle since Leipzig in 1813 resulted in heavy carnage and negotiations to end the Second Italian War of Independence

**F**or one of the final times in history, ruling monarchs faced one another on the battlefield, with Emperor Napoleon III of France and King Victor Emmanuel II of Piedmont-Sardinia opposing Emperor Franz Josef I of Austria at Solferino on 24 June 1859. The combined number of troops involved exceeded 300,000, and in its costly wake the Second Italian War of Independence came to an end.

The war had begun two months earlier with the Austrian Army responding to Piedmontese provocations. Franz Josef launched an invasion,

but after their defeat at the Battle of Magenta on 4 June, the Austrians began a withdrawal from Lombardy. The French-Piedmontese Army pursued. Both manoeuvred for advantage, and the opposing forces clashed inadvertently around the village of Solferino.

Both were also poorly led, and the battle devolved into confusion. Casualties soared as the fighting lasted for hours.

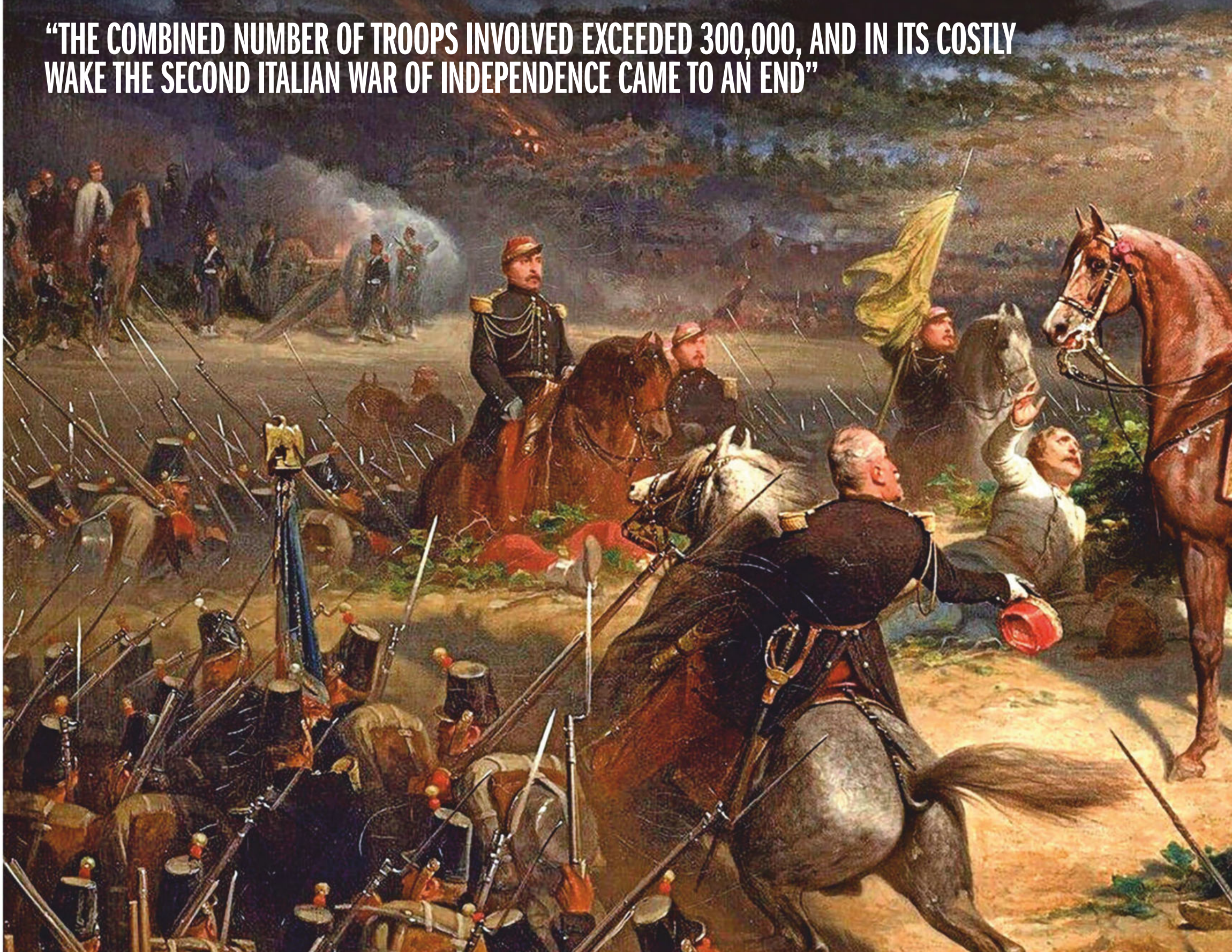
## **Battle joined at Medole**

Early on June 24, The French-Piedmontese Army moved eastward. Four French

corps were to occupy Solferino and the neighbouring villages of Medole, Cavriana and Guidizzolo. Four Piedmontese divisions were to capture Pozzolengo. At approximately 4.00am, General Adolphe Niel, commanding IV Corps on the French right, engaged an Austrian infantry regiment.

Manoeuvring east of Medole, Niel was reinforced by elements of the III Corps under Marshal Francois Certain de Canrobert and drove the Austrian infantry and supporting cavalry back. In pursuit, the French encountered elements of three Austrian corps

**“THE COMBINED NUMBER OF TROOPS INVOLVED EXCEEDED 300,000, AND IN ITS COSTLY WAKE THE SECOND ITALIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE CAME TO AN END”**





and were outnumbered two to one. The Austrians failed to press their advantage, and Niel's artillery tore gaping holes in their ranks. Piecemeal Austrian attacks were repulsed, and by mid-afternoon their centre at Solferino had collapsed. When Franz Josef ordered a flank attack against the advancing French, Niel's own advance disrupted the Austrian effort. For his adept leadership, Niel was elevated to Marshal of France.

### Decision in the centre

The fighting around Solferino decided the battle. At 4.30am, troops of the French I and II Corps along with the Imperial Guard clashed with the I, III, and V Corps of the Austrian Army. Heavy fighting erupted as the French pushed the Austrians back to a ridgeline west of Solferino, where they made a heroic stand until driven back into the town around 10.00am.

Further west, French Marshal Achille Baraguey d'Hilliers impetuously sent his I Corps forward without artillery support. Several assaults were repulsed with heavy casualties. While Baraguey d'Hilliers troops were bloodied, the French artillery deployed. At 2.00pm a

coordinated attack was launched. In half an hour the Austrians were swept from positions in the town cemetery and adjacent high ground.

Marshal Patrice de MacMahon advanced with his French II Corps alongside Baraguey d'Hilliers and fought off numerous Austrian attacks while covering the gap between his command and Niel's IV corps to the south. In the afternoon, MacMahon counterattacked, capturing the village of San Cassiano, south of Solferino. He was halted when Austrian troops stood their ground and the French Imperial Guard reinforcements compelled them to retire.

The French pressed eastward toward Franz Josef's headquarters at Cavriana, capturing the town at 6.00pm, rupturing the Austrian centre, and forcing their withdrawal across the River Mincio as a thunderstorm limited further action.

### Stalemate in the north

The four Piedmontese divisions met Austrian opposition around Pozzolengo and the villages of Madonna della Scoperta and San Martino around 7.00am. The Austrian VII Corps, entrenched on high ground, repulsed three assaults by 22,000 Piedmontese troops,

leaving scores of dead and wounded. As the battle wore on, the Austrian commander ignored an order to withdraw until 8.00pm. Although the action in the north was inconclusive, the Piedmontese succeeded in pinning down large numbers of Austrian troops, preventing their movement against French forces in the centre.

### Agonising aftermath

The staggering toll at Solferino shook both Napoleon III and Franz Josef I. The French and Piedmontese had suffered 17,000 killed and wounded, the Austrians 22,000. Both monarchs realised that continuing such slaughter would be intolerable. The French also worried that Prussia might intervene on behalf of the Austrians.

The war ended with the Treaty of Zurich, concluded on 10 November 1859, and Austria ceded Lombardy to Piedmont. On 17 March 1861, the Piedmontese nominally achieved their goal with the unification of the Kingdom of Italy. Still, although Italy was proclaimed a state, Rome and Venezia remained to be incorporated.

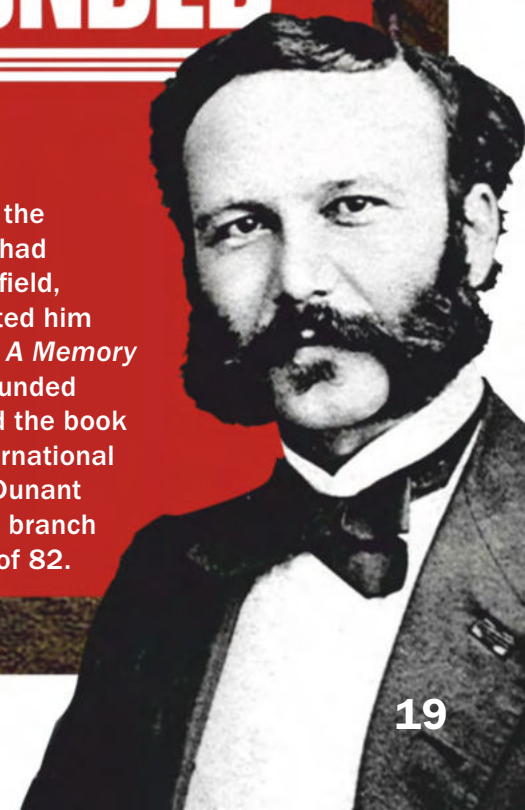
*French Emperor Napoleon III orders troops forward at the Battle of Solferino*

*Below: Jean-Henri Dunant is credited with founding the International Committee of the Red Cross*

## MERCY FOR THE WOUNDED

### THE TREMENDOUS NUMBER OF WOUNDED AT THE BATTLE OF SOLFERINO LED TO THE FORMATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS

Swiss businessman and humanitarian Jean-Henri Dunant witnessed firsthand the carnage at the Battle of Solferino and was moved to action. After the fighting had ceased, approximately 23,000 wounded lay scattered across the broad battlefield, and Dunant attempted to organise efforts to render aid. The experience affected him profoundly, and after returning to his home in Geneva, Dunant wrote the book *A Memory Of Solferino*, advocating the concept of a neutral entity that might care for wounded soldiers who might otherwise die for lack of medical attention. Dunant printed the book at his own expense, and its distribution proved a catalyst for founding the International Committee of the Red Cross and later the Geneva Convention. For his effort, Dunant received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1901. He was also the founder of the Swiss branch of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA). He died in 1910 at the age of 82.





# GARIBALDI'S GAMBIT

Giuseppe Garibaldi's Expedition of the Mille against the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was a daring bid for Italian unification, which brought the kingdom closer to independence during the Risorgimento

**T**he Risorgimento, Italy's decades-long journey toward unification, was marked by three wars for independence and a new beginning after centuries of foreign domination. By early 1860, the Treaty of Turin had exacted a price for continuing French support in Piedmont's effort to unify the Italian state. On 24 March, the Duchy of Savoy and the county of Nice, where the Italian language was predominantly spoken, were ceded to France.

The treaty was unpopular in many quarters, particularly among those natives of Nice who considered themselves Italian. The most prominent of these was the nationalist Giuseppe Garibaldi, who seethed at the perceived French land grab and vowed to raise opposition strong enough to bring Nice back into the Italian fold. At the same time, Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour, Prime Minister of Piedmont-Sardinia, was a pragmatic diplomat. Cavour realised that Garibaldi's aims might provoke war with France. Rather than antagonising the French, Cavour persuaded Garibaldi to look southward, toward the Bourbon regime in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, where a movement for independence was already stirring.

Garibaldi did not trust Cavour, who had brokered the deal signing Nice away to the French. Still, he agreed to the prime minister's alternative. Did Cavour really believe Garibaldi's southern adventure would succeed, or was he hoping to send the troublesome soldier of fortune to his demise?

Garibaldi was bold, a republican politically, but also willing to place the goal of Italian independence above his own ambitions, which required that he serve the monarchy of Piedmont-Sardinia, King Victor Emmanuel II. Refocusing his effort, Garibaldi embarked on the ambitious campaign, and historians continue to debate the likelihood of success when the soldier sailed from Quarto near the port of Genoa on 6 May 1860, with only 1,000 loyal 'Red Shirt' volunteers.

The so-called Mille Expedition was fraught with peril, but if successful all of southern Italy might come into the fold of independence. Spain had long dominated the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and the time appeared ripe for its conquest. Nevertheless, King Francis II controlled an army of 150,000 troops. Was Garibaldi destined to die, his plan quickly shattered by an overwhelming host of Sicilian soldiers?

Garibaldi's band of 'revolutionaries' made landfall near Marsala on the west coast of Sicily, and the call for additional volunteers rang across the countryside. At Calatafimi on 13 May, the invaders defeated a force of 2,000 Sicilian troops. Soon, Garibaldi's numbers grew to about 4,000, emboldening the leader to proclaim himself Victor Emmanuel's proxy dictator of Sicily. His army advanced on Palermo and laid siege to the capital, defended by 16,000 troops under General Ferdinando Lanza. Garibaldi attacked in two columns and forced the defenders to abandon forward positions. When Sicilian reinforcements arrived from Naples, however, Garibaldi was in a precarious situation. The timely intervention of British naval officers resulted in a truce. The Neapolitans withdrew, and Garibaldi was left in possession of Palermo.

Garibaldi was proclaimed a hero, and within days he had effectively deposed Francis II as ruler of Sicily. He followed up with the conquest of Messina and then mounted an expedition to the mainland. Crossing the Strait of Messina despite the presence of a powerful Sicilian fleet, he intimidated the garrison at Reggio Calabria into surrendering and marched triumphantly northward. Immediate resistance crumbled, and as the invading army moved through the Apulia and Basilicata both declared their allegiance to the Kingdom of Italy. By the end of August, Garibaldi had reached Salerno on the Tyrrhenian Sea. Francis II retreated from Naples, and on 7 September Garibaldi entered the city to a tumultuous welcome.

Although his army had grown to about 25,000 men, Garibaldi was unable to decisively defeat the Neapolitan army, entrenched along the Volturno River. Eventually, Cavour and French Emperor Napoleon III came to an arrangement that allowed the army of Piedmont to march south, brush aside resistance from the Papal States, and link up with Garibaldi, who immediately proclaimed his allegiance to King Victor Emmanuel and returned to Naples at the monarch's side.

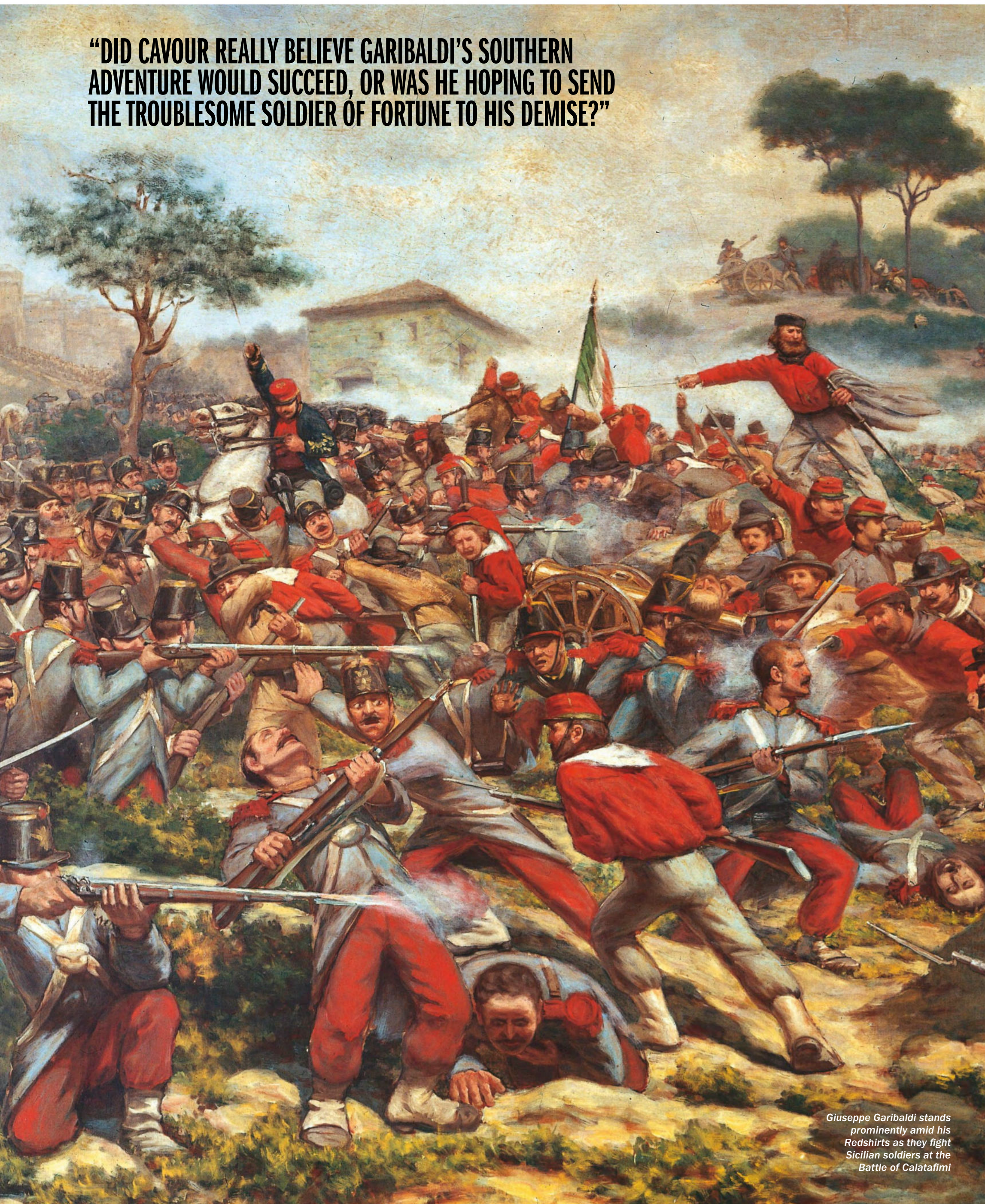
The prospects for the success of Garibaldi's Mille Expedition appeared slim at the outset, and its spectacular achievements could hardly have been foreseen. Historians continue to ponder the depth of Garibaldi's leadership. Through daring and force of personality he had harnessed the fervour of anti-Bourbon sentiment in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and rallied thousands of volunteers to his banner, bringing the Kingdom of Italy much closer to unification and independence.

*A victorious Giuseppe Garibaldi greets King Victor Emmanuel II near Naples during his stunning Expedition of the Mille*





**“DID CAVOUR REALLY BELIEVE GARIBALDI’S SOUTHERN ADVENTURE WOULD SUCCEED, OR WAS HE HOPING TO SEND THE TROUBLESOME SOLDIER OF FORTUNE TO HIS DEMISE?”**



Giuseppe Garibaldi stands prominently amid his Redshirts as they fight Sicilian soldiers at the Battle of Calatafimi



# IN THE RANKS

Elite forces and regular army regiments fought during the three Italian Wars of Independence during the 19th century



## THE REDSHIRTS

A HERO OF THE ITALIAN WARS OF INDEPENDENCE, GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI LED THE REDSHIRTS IN SEVERAL MILITARY CAMPAIGNS

Politically Garibaldi was Republican, but on more than one occasion he supported the Piedmontese monarchy, placing the goal of independence before his own partisan beliefs. The origin of the red shirt, distinctive for its colour and blousy look, arose possibly when Garibaldi called for volunteers to fight while in exile in Uruguay, appropriating red shirts originally destined for slaughterhouse workers in Argentina to distinguish his followers from other troops. Another story asserts that Garibaldi, who fled to New York after his failed defence of Rome during the First Italian War of Independence, admired the red flannel shirts of the city's firefighters and brought them back to Italy in the 1850s.

Garibaldi was an inspirational leader, well acquainted with the techniques of guerrilla warfare and successful in recruiting volunteers among the common people of Italy. He led volunteers in the successful Expedition of the Thousand to subdue the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies during the Second War of Independence in 1860, and commanded alpine troops in Trentino during the Third War of Independence in 1866. Empress Eugenie of France popularised a ladies garment that became known as the Garibaldi Shirt.

**“GARIBALDI CALLED FOR VOLUNTEERS TO FIGHT WHILE IN EXILE IN URUGUAY, APPROPRIATING RED SHIRTS ORIGINALLY DESTINED FOR SLAUGHTERHOUSE WORKERS IN ARGENTINA”**





*Battle of Solferino. Austria was defeated by the Napoleonic troops*

## AUSTRIAN 59TH 'ERZHERZOG RAINER' INFANTRY REGIMENT

ALREADY A STORIED UNIT OF THE AUSTRIAN ARMY, THE 59TH REGIMENT DISTINGUISHED ITSELF AT SOLFERINO

After the decisive Battle of Solferino during the Second War of Italian Independence, Austrian Emperor Franz Josef I called the 59th 'Erzherzog Rainer' Regiment the "bravest of the brave" even in defeat. One of the original Salzburg 'House' regiments which dated to the earliest days of the professional Austrian Army in 1682,

the 59th Regiment was a component of the Austrian VIII Corps at Solferino under the command of General Ludwig August Ritter von Benedek. The regiment, along with other veteran units of the VIII Corps, repeatedly repulsed attacks by Piedmontese troops on the northern, or right, flank of the army.

## IMPERIAL GUARD OF NAPOLEON III

EMPEROR NAPOLEON III REINSTATED THE IMPERIAL GUARD TO REVIVE THE ELITE FORMATION THAT SERVED HIS UNCLE, NAPOLEON I, WITH SUCH DEVOTION

By decree of Emperor Napoleon III dated 1 May 1854, a total of 17 regiments of infantry, cavalry and artillery along with other units reconstituted the Imperial Guard of the French Army. The original Imperial Guard had served with distinction under Emperor Napoleon I, and like its predecessor the Imperial Guard of Napoleon III were elite troops. Line regiments nominated individual veteran soldiers of good character for the Imperial Guard, and these troops enjoyed higher pay and generally better living conditions than others. In exchange, they were considered a reliable reserve on the battlefield and to be politically loyal during peacetime.

*A helmet and cuirass for cuirassiers, of the Imperial Guard, from the reign of Napoleon III*

## BERSAGLIERI

THE PIEDMONTESE ARMY UNDER KING VICTOR EMMANUEL II DEPLOYED NUMEROUS ELITE LIGHT INFANTRY BATTALIONS AT THE BATTLE OF SOLFERINO

General Alessandro Ferrero la Marmora established the Italian tradition of the Bersaglieri Corps in 1836, initially intending to deploy them as alpine troops and screening units in advance of slower formations. By the outbreak of the Second Italian War of Independence, these elite soldiers had assumed the role of light infantry, superb shock troops trained to deploy rapidly, often on the run. They were still regularly utilised as advanced guard or reconnaissance troops and were armed with rifled carbines that were deadly accurate in the hands of an experienced infantryman. At Solferino, the Bersaglieri fought with distinction as the Piedmontese Army engaged Austrian forces on the northern shoulder of the battlefield.

*Right: Bersagliere, by Michele Cammarano (1835-1920)*



*Images: Alamy, Getty*

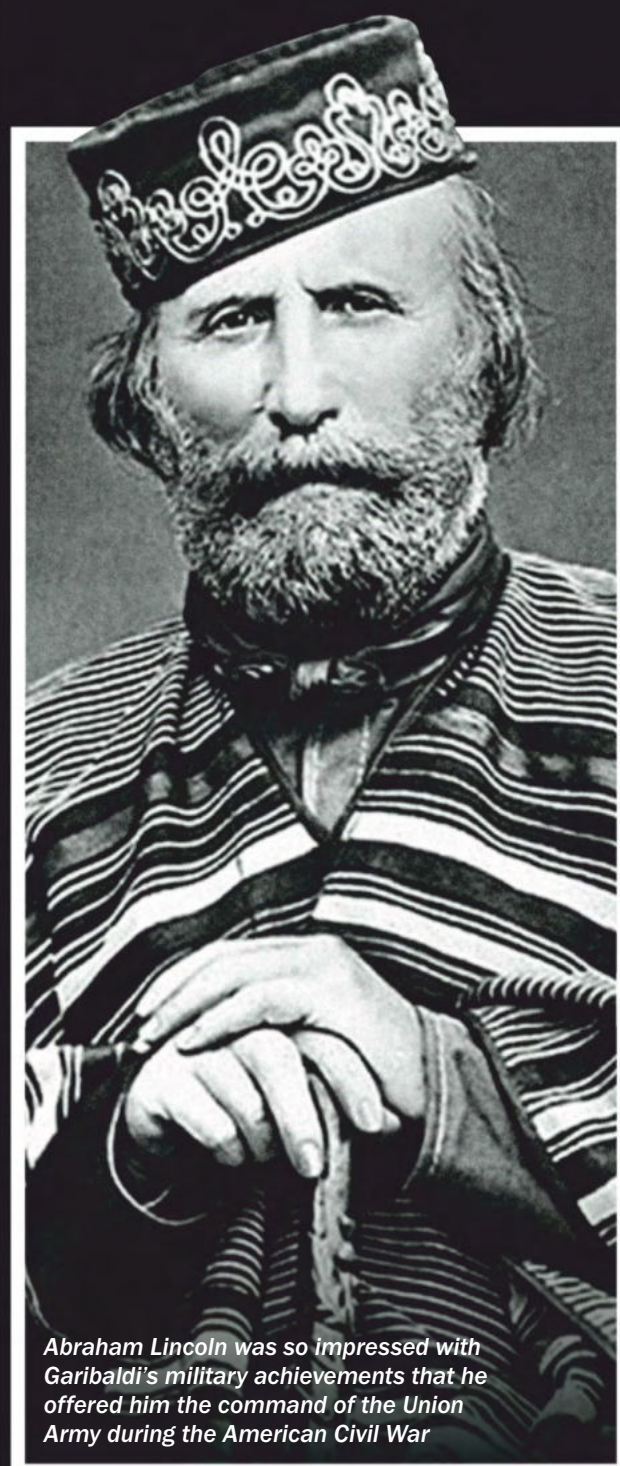


# REVOLUTIONARIES KINGS AND GENERALS

The leaders in the fight for Italian unification included monarchs, soldiers and one of the most famous men of the 19th century

## GIUSEPPE GARIBALDI THE ICON OF ITALIAN UNIFICATION 1807-82

Responsible for most of the military victories of the Risorgimento, Garibaldi was born in Nice to a Ligurian family and began his career as a merchant sailor. In the early 1830s, he joined the Piedmont-Sardinian Navy but had to escape to South America following a failed mutiny.



Abraham Lincoln was so impressed with Garibaldi's military achievements that he offered him the command of the Union Army during the American Civil War

Garibaldi spent 12 years in South America where he commanded the Uruguayan Navy and formed an Italian Legion known as the 'Redshirts'. He defended Montevideo and won several victories where he impressed observers with his guerrilla tactics. After returning to Italy in 1848 with remnants of his Redshirts, Garibaldi fought for Milan during the First Italian War of Independence.

After travelling to North America, the Pacific and England, Garibaldi served as a major general during the Second War of Italian Independence and formed a volunteer unit called the 'Hunters of the Alps'. He was disappointed with the war's outcome and instead launched an audacious venture with Redshirt volunteers known as the Expedition of the Mille in 1860.

**"HE WAS FAMED FOR HIS HONESTY, SIMPLE RADICALISM AND LACK OF PERSONAL AMBITION FOR POWER"**

The expedition resulted in a popular revolution, spectacular victories and the conquest of Sicily and Naples for Piedmont-Sardinia. Garibaldi was able to proclaim Victor Emmanuel II as king of a united Italy and a new kingdom was established in 1861. Nevertheless, he clashed with the newly unified Italian government, particularly when he attempted to march on the still-independent Papal state of Rome. He was defeated and wounded by the Royal Italian Army but ultimately reconciled with the Italian government. After successfully fighting in the Third Italian War of Independence against Austria, Garibaldi supported the new French Third Republic against Prussia. He spent much of his last years in semi-retirement on Caprera where he died in 1882.

Garibaldi was much admired internationally, particularly in Britain and the USA. He was famed for his honesty, simple radicalism and lack of personal ambition for power. He was also recognised as a progressive champion of labour rights, women's emancipation, racial equality and the abolition of capital punishment.

Victor Emmanuel II kept his original regal title rather than becoming Victor Emmanuel I of Italy, a decision that was widely unpopular



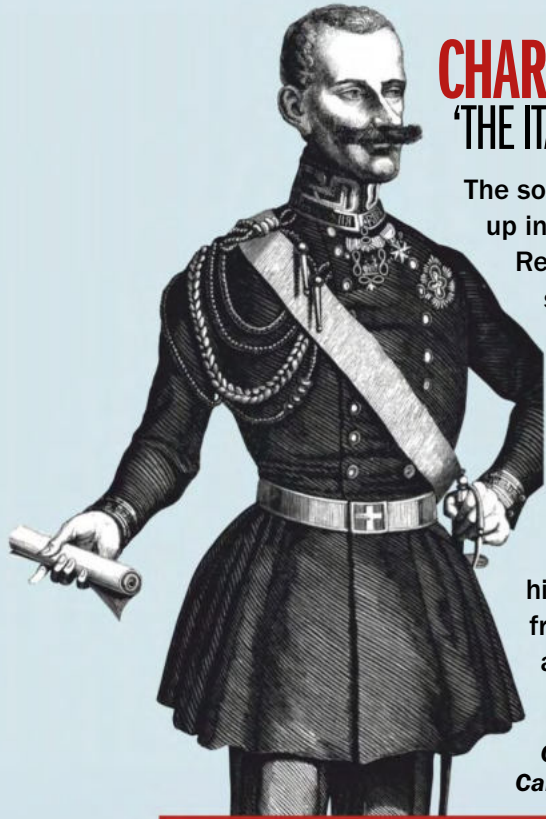
## VICTOR EMMANUEL II OF ITALY THE FIRST MONARCH OF A UNIFIED ITALIAN PENINSULA 1820-78

Born in Turin, Victor Emmanuel was the son of King Charles Albert of Piedmont-Sardinia. He was given a conventional monarchical education that emphasised military training and he commanded a division during the First Italian War of Independence. During that conflict, Victor Emmanuel proved that he was personally brave but an indifferent general. Nevertheless his father abdicated following his defeat and his son became the king of Piedmont-Sardinia in 1849.

Victor Emmanuel became the symbol of the Risorgimento movement in the 1850s-60s and was provided with substantial military support from Napoleon III during the Second War of Italian Independence. He was an active participant at the battles of Magenta and Solferino but was excommunicated by Pope Pius IX after his forces attacked a Papal army.

Victor Emmanuel secretly encouraged Garibaldi's Expedition of the Mille and its success directly led to him being crowned as king of Italy. He subsequently won the Third War of Italian Independence and entered Rome in 1870. His excommunication was eventually reversed on his deathbed and the king was buried in the Pantheon.





## CHARLES ALBERT OF PIEDMONT-SARDINIA 'THE ITALIAN HAMLET' 1798-1849

The son of Charles Emmanuel, Prince of Carignano, Charles Albert was brought up in Paris and Geneva where he was exposed to the ideas of the French Revolution. When he returned to Milan he associated with liberals before succeeding his cousin as king of Piedmont-Sardinia in 1831. He initially ruled as a conservative but adopted the idea of a federal Italy free from Austrian rule in 1848.

In the same year Charles Albert granted the Albertine Statute – the first Italian constitution – before he led his forces against Austria during the First Italian War of Independence. The king was abandoned by both Pope Pius IX and Ferdinand II of the Two Sicilies and was defeated at Novara in March 1849. He decided to abdicate, despite advice not to, in favour of his son Victor Emmanuel so that Piedmont-Sardinia could gain better terms from the victorious Austrians. As Victor Emmanuel II, the new king agreed to a new armistice with favourable terms. Meanwhile Charles Albert travelled to Portugal where he died in Oporto in July 1849.

*Charles Albert was nicknamed 'the Italian Hamlet' by Nobel Laureate Giosuè Carducci because of his gloomy, hesitant and enigmatic character*

## JOSEPH RADETSKY VON RADETZ THE EXPERIENCED VETERAN WHO WON THE FIRST ITALIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE FOR AUSTRIA 1766-1858

A Bohemian nobleman, Radetsky joined the Austrian Army in 1784 as a cadet. He first saw active service during the Austro-Turkish War (1787-91) and fought extensively during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. A veteran of – among others – Fleurus, Marengo, Wagram and Brienne, Radetsky eventually became an important diplomat at the Congress of Vienna.

After becoming a field marshal in 1836, Radetsky was by now an old man but still retained his fighting vigour. Following the 1848 Revolutions, he commanded Austrian forces against the revolutionary Italians. During the First War of Italian Independence he won great victories at Custoza and Novara. These successes won the war for Austria and he subsequently served as the governor of Lombardy-Venetia between 1850-57. Radetsky was known as 'Father' by his troops and was even viewed favourably by the Italians as a fair governor and gentleman who allowed liberal patriots to live peacefully.

*Johann Strauss Sr. composed the Radetsky March in honour of the field marshal, which became a popular marching song and an unofficial Austrian national anthem*



*After the unification of Italy, Cialdini fought a bloody conflict to suppress bands of brigands in southern Italy that resulted in thousands of casualties and executions*

## ENRICO CIALDINI THE ITALIAN NATIONALIST WHO CONTROVERSIALLY DEFEATED GARIBALDI IN BATTLE 1811-92

Born in Castelvetro, Modena, Cialdini initially studied medicine but became involved in a local revolt. He fled to Spain where he fought traditionalist Carlists before he returned to Italy in 1848. He commanded a regiment at the Battle of Novara and was wounded at Monte Berico. Cialdini subsequently fought for Piedmont-Sardinia during the Crimean War and rose to the rank of general.

During the Second War of Italian Independence, Cialdini organised an Alpine Brigade and distinguished himself by winning the Battle of Castelfidardo and the Siege of Gaeta as well as taking Ancona. Victor Emmanuel II made him duke of Gaeta but he did not get on with Giuseppe Garibaldi who he defeated at Aspromonte in 1862.

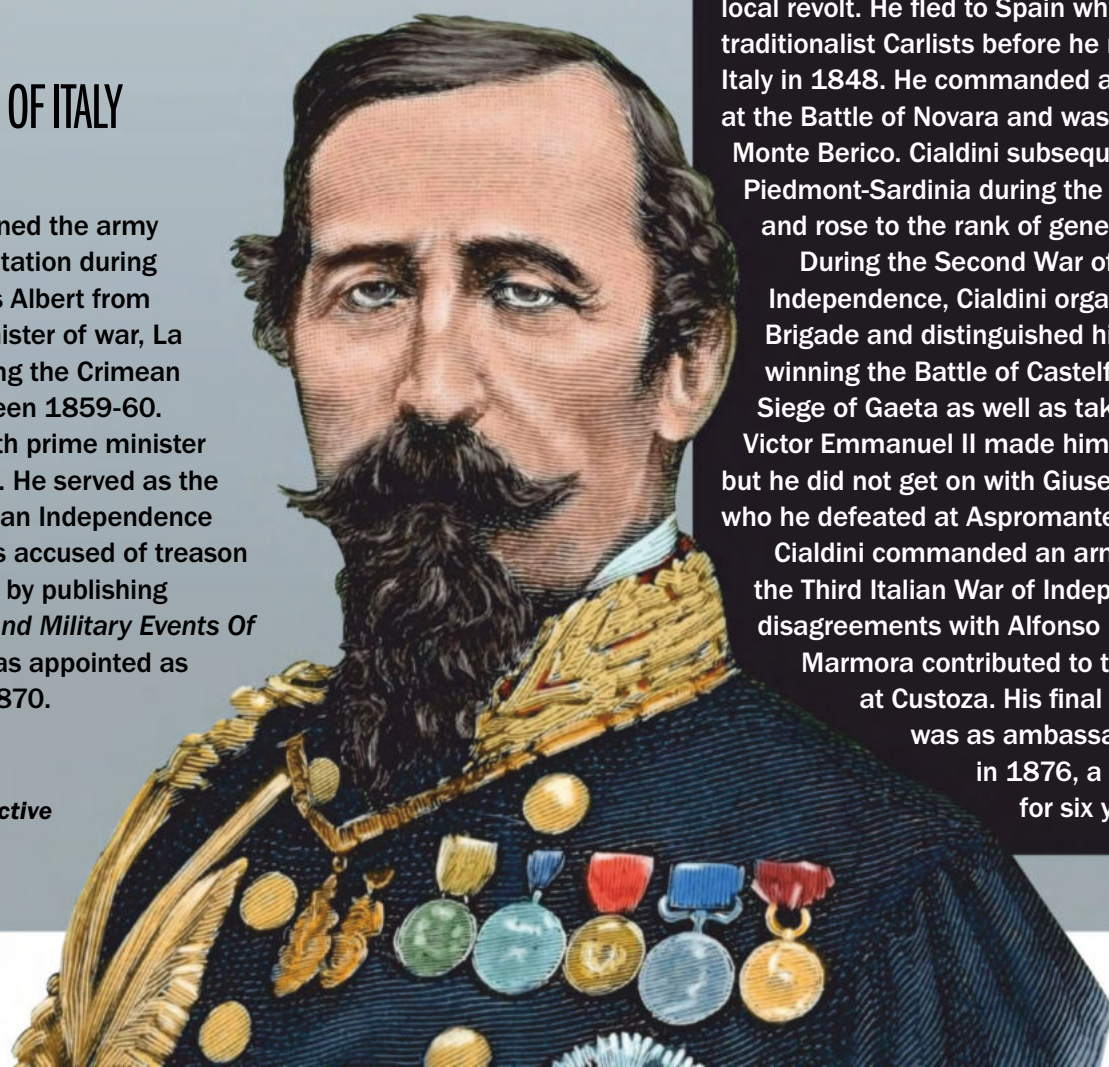
Cialdini commanded an army corps during the Third Italian War of Independence but disagreements with Alfonso Ferrero La Marmora contributed to the Italian defeat at Custoza. His final appointment was as ambassador to France in 1876, a position he held for six years.

## ALFONSO FERRERO LA MARMORA THE PROMINENT GENERAL AND PRIME MINISTER OF ITALY AND PIEDMONT-SARDINIA 1804-78

A graduate of Turing Military Academy, La Marmora joined the army of Piedmont-Sardinia in 1823 and established his reputation during the revolutions of 1848 where he rescued King Charles Albert from Milanese revolutionaries. Promoted to general and minister of war, La Marmora commanded Piedmont-Sardinian forces during the Crimean War and served as the kingdom's prime minister between 1859-60.

Between 1864-66, La Marmora served as Italy's sixth prime minister and concluded an alliance with Prussia against Austria. He served as the Italian Army's chief of staff during the Third War of Italian Independence but lost the Battle of Custoza on 23 June 1866. He was accused of treason following his defeat but vigorously defended his tactics by publishing documents called *A Little More Light On The Political And Military Events Of 1866*. His reputation was partially restored when he was appointed as lieutenant-royal of the new Italian capital of Rome in 1870.

*La Marmora founded the Bersaglieri, a specialised infantry corps of the Italian Army that are famous for wearing distinctive wide-brimmed hats that are decorated with black feathers*





# ZHUKOV

## *RISE OF STALIN'S GREATEST GENERAL*

WORDS ANTHONY TUCKER-JONES

The future Marshal and Red Army hero cut his teeth by soundly defeating the Japanese – something Hitler foolishly chose to ignore



Right: Russian General Georgi Konstantinovich Zhukov



**D**uring the summer of 1939 Russian General Georgi Konstantinovich Zhukov crushed the Japanese Army on the steppes of Mongolia so decisively that Japan never meddled in Soviet affairs again. It ensured that Joseph Stalin was free to fight on just one front rather than two when the time came. When Adolf Hitler's armies reached Moscow, Zhukov was there with his wealth of experience waiting for them along with his hardened Siberian divisions.

So, how did Zhukov, future hero of the Battles of Moscow, Kursk and Berlin, born to peasant stock in 1896, become Russia's most famous general? He was to achieve this largely through a combination of aptitude and being in the right place at the right time.

After the Russian Civil War the veterans of the Bolshevik 1st Cavalry Army manoeuvred themselves into positions of power. This was Stalin's favourite formation. Despite his purges, an old boy's network survived to ensure that the Red Army retained a few relatively competent commanders. Among them were Zhukov, Semyon Mikhailovich Budenny and Semyon Konstantinovich Timoshenko.

Zhukov's military career began to progress when he served as a squadron commander under Budenny with the 1st Cavalry Army. More importantly Zhukov's brigade commander was Timoshenko. He was conscripted in 1915 and subsequently joined the Red Army at the start of the Revolution. Zhukov first saw action during the civil war against the Whites near Shipovo in 1919, when his unit was attacked by 800 Cossacks.

A key lesson he learned was that cavalry must be supported by adequate firepower. After the war he soon rose to regimental and then brigade commander.

Just over two decades later Timoshenko, by then a marshal and people's commissar for defence, ensured Zhukov became his principal assistant, chief of the general staff in January 1941 at the age of 44. Neither Budenny nor Timoshenko would show the flare or indeed survival instincts exhibited by Zhukov before, or during the war.

Budenny was a very old-school cavalryman, with a deep rooted scepticism of tanks, and was not considered very bright by some. His main contribution to the Red Army seems to have been his ridiculously large moustache, and a comical looking civil war era cloth helmet, named after him.

Nonetheless, from 1937-39 he held the key posts of commander of the Moscow Military District, then the first deputy people's commissar of defence and during the German invasion commanded the Southwestern Front.

**“HOW DID ZHUKOV, FUTURE HERO OF THE BATTLES OF MOSCOW, KURSK AND BERLIN, BORN TO PEASANT STOCK IN 1896, BECOME RUSSIA'S MOST FAMOUS GENERAL?”**

Notably Zhukov, prior to his appointment as Timoshenko's deputy, served as deputy commander of the Byelorussian Military District. He prudently distanced himself from politics and escaped Stalin's purges. Zhukov was appointed commander of the 3rd Cavalry Corps in 1937, but shortly after was offered the 6th Cossack Corps. Zhukov discovered this latter formation contained an old command of his, the Don Cossack Division, as well the 6th Chongar and 29th Cavalry Divisions.

### **Border wars**

Zhukov was offered the Byelorussian post at the end of 1938, commanding the cavalry and tank units, which were to comprise of around five cavalry divisions, some four detached tank brigades and other supporting units. Saying goodbye to the Cossack Corps, Zhukov travelled to Smolensk and during May 1939 conducted exercises near Minsk, little realising that this would soon be the scene of bitter battles with Hitler's marauding panzers.

Hitler and his high command watched with great interest as the Red Army fought three brief and very different border wars in the second half of 1939. That summer it was involved in what seemed an inconsequential border squabble with the Japanese. Then in September, just 16 days after Hitler's invasion of Poland, it rolled into eastern Poland, under the terms of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact. Polish opposition to the Red Army was negligible, which was just as well, as its conduct proved to be the complete opposite of the Wehrmacht's highly efficient blitzkrieg. Then in the winter the outnumbered Finnish Army



*Zhukov briefing his commanders in Mongolia. He carried out a large pincer movement against the Japanese, a technique he would use against the Germans*



ran circles round the Red Army, after it became trapped in Finland's dense forests.

The Soviet-Japanese War could not have come at a better time for Zhukov and the Red Army. Zhukov would gain invaluable experience, developing his new armoured warfare tactics. He would also become familiar with the forces of the Transbaikal Military District, guarding the Chinese Manchuria-Manchukuo border. This district came into being in the mid-1930s as a precautionary measure in response to Japan's invasion of China. It also helped create a very useful reserve for the Red Army.

The main Japanese force in occupied Manchuria, known as Manchukuo, was the Kwantung Army. Japan coveted the Soviet port of Vladivostok, but to keep the Red Army at bay first needed to sever the Trans-Siberian railway. As a precautionary measure the Red Army occupied Changkufeng Hill, near the mouth of the Tyumen River on the eastern border southwest of Vladivostok. Throughout the summer of 1938 the Japanese probed Soviet defences with a series of border incidents near Vladivostok at Lake Khasan. The Soviet response was poor, revealing the true

**“ZHUKOV QUICKLY CAME TO THE ASSESSMENT THAT 57TH CORPS IN ITS PRESENT STATE, WAS NOT UP TO THE JOB OF DIRECTING OPERATIONS NOR STOPPING THE JAPANESE”**

extent of Stalin's purges. On 11 July 1938 fighting broke out when the Japanese tried to remove Soviet troops from Changkufeng, however they had fortified the area and remained in possession of the hill following an armistice on 10 August 1938.

The Japanese risked losing face after the formal ceasefire, however the Emperor, Hirohito, agreed to the General Staff's plan to act much further west against Mongolia. Stalin's paranoia had left the Red Army in disarray and with war brewing with Finland, which would tie up resources and severely stretch its capabilities, and tensions growing over Poland, he looked around for someone he could trust, who would swiftly put an end to Japanese adventurism. He chose Zhukov.

The Soviet high command was not ignorant of Japan's conquest of huge areas of China

and that this constituted a very real threat to the Soviet border. Zhukov was ordered to see Marshal Voroshilov, the People's Commissar of Defence, in Moscow on 2 June 1939. Voroshilov told him, "Japanese troops have made a surprise attack and crossed into friendly Mongolia which the Soviet government is committed to defend from external aggression by the Treaty of 12 March 1936. Here is a map of the invasion area showing the situation as of 30 May." Pointing to it Voroshilov added, "The Japanese had for a long time carried out provocative attacks on Mongolian frontier guards, and here the Japanese Hailar garrison invaded MPR territory and attached Mongolian frontier units which were covering the area east of Khalkhin Gol.

"I think they've started a big military gamble. At any rate, it's only the beginning ... could you fly there right away and if need be assume command of our troops?"



*Zhukov conducted a series of combined exercises in the 1930s that convinced him of the future of armoured warfare*



*A young Zhukov served with the 38th and 40th Cavalry Regiments, 7th Samara Cavalry Division during 1922-23*



### 'Pull no punches'

Zhukov jumped at the chance to show what he was capable of. He then went to see Ivan Smorodinov, Acting Deputy Chief of the General Staff. "The moment you arrive," instructed Smorodinov, "see what's going on and report to us. But pull no punches." Zhukov understood only too well that his new appointment could make or break his career. Simply ousting the Japanese from Outer Mongolia would not be enough, the Japanese would have to be dealt such a blow that they would never consider tackling the Red Army again. In effect the security of the whole of the Soviet Far East rested in Zhukov's hands. It was time to put into practice all his training in Byelorussia.

Accompanied by a small team Zhukov flew east, landing first in Chita, headquarters of the Transbaikalian Military District. He found the city a secretive place. The Japanese had briefly occupied it for two years at the end of the First World War and prior to that it had been the scene of resistance to Tsarist rule. Under the Soviet authorities Chita was closed to most Russians and all foreigners, because of its proximity on the strategically important Trans-Siberian railway and the Chinese-Mongolian borders.

Zhukov met with General V.F. Yakovlev, the military district commander, and his officers. Yakovlev appreciated Stalin was taking the Japanese incursion into the Mongolian People's Republic very seriously, especially if the people's commissariat of defence had sent a special envoy, with the authority to take charge without recourse to any of the regional commands. In the first instance what Zhukov needed to make a thorough assessment of the situation was credible intelligence. He was informed that General N.V. Feklenko's 57th Special Corps was forward deployed to the southeast in Mongolia, tasked with protecting the republic. This was good news as it meant that the Red Army had a corps level command and control structure in place in the MPR.

Worryingly it transpired that the Japanese Air Force had been attacking Soviet troop movements in Mongolia, indicating a lack of support from the Red Air Force. Apart from this Zhukov was very disappointed by the vagueness and lack of detailed intelligence. It was immediately clear that Yakovlev's communications with Feklenko were very poor. It was also very evident that Feklenko did not have a firm grip on the situation. In light of

previous border fighting Feklenko's lack of urgency seemed very puzzling.

Just three days after his Moscow briefing, Zhukov arrived at 57th Special Corps HQ at Tamtsak-Bulak in Mongolia and met with Feklenko, Regimental Commissar M.S. Nikishev, who was Corps Commissar, and Brigade Commander A.M. Kushchev, Chief of Staff. To Zhukov's irritation the situation was a complete mess. The HQ had little appreciation of the situation, communication between the Soviet and Mongolian commands was non-existent and coordination lacking.

Zhukov was very unhappy that none of the commanders, except for Nikishev, had even visited the front and therefore had little idea of what was happening on the ground. Grasping the situation, he travelled up to the front and found that local intelligence was equally poor. Zhukov quickly came to the assessment that 57th Corps in its present state was not up to the job of directing operations nor stopping the Japanese.

He immediately sent his report to Voroshilov, stating he planned that Soviet-Mongolian troops should maintain the bridgehead, on the right bank of the Khalkhin-Gol river, while preparing for a counter-offensive. Voroshilov agreed and the ineffectual Feklenko found himself

## FORWARD THINKER

### ZHUKOV SAW THE FUTURE OF WARFARE – MECHANISED UNITS

Zhukov was not a conservative cavalryman like Budenny, far from it, he was very progressive. During his time in the Byelorussian Military District, Zhukov recalled, "It was clear that the future largely belonged to armour and mechanised units. Hence we gave undivided attention to questions of cavalry-armour cooperation, and the organisation of anti-tank defences in combat and in executing manoeuvres." While commanding the 3rd and then 6th Corps, Zhukov cooperated closely with the 21st Detached Tank Brigade, under M.I. Potapov, and the 3rd Detached Tank Brigade, under V.V. Novikov. Both commanders were in Zhukov's own words "former mates of mine".

*Marshal Budenny (centre) was an old-school cavalry commander who did not like tanks*







*British Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery (centre, right) leaves the Brandenburg Gate after a ceremony to decorate Soviet Generals, Berlin, 12 July 1945. With him are Marshals of the Soviet Union Georgy Zhukov (centre, left), Vasily Sokolovsky (centre, right, background) and Konstantin Rokossovsky (centre, right, foreground)*

**“FORTUNATELY FOR STALIN, WHEN HITLER REACHED THE VERY GATES OF MOSCOW, ZHUKOV KNEW WHAT TO DO. HE WOULD SAVE THE RUSSIAN CAPITAL AND GO ON TO DEFEAT THE GERMANS AT KURSK AND MINSK, THEN CROWN HIS REMARKABLE CAREER WITH THE CAPTURE OF BERLIN”**







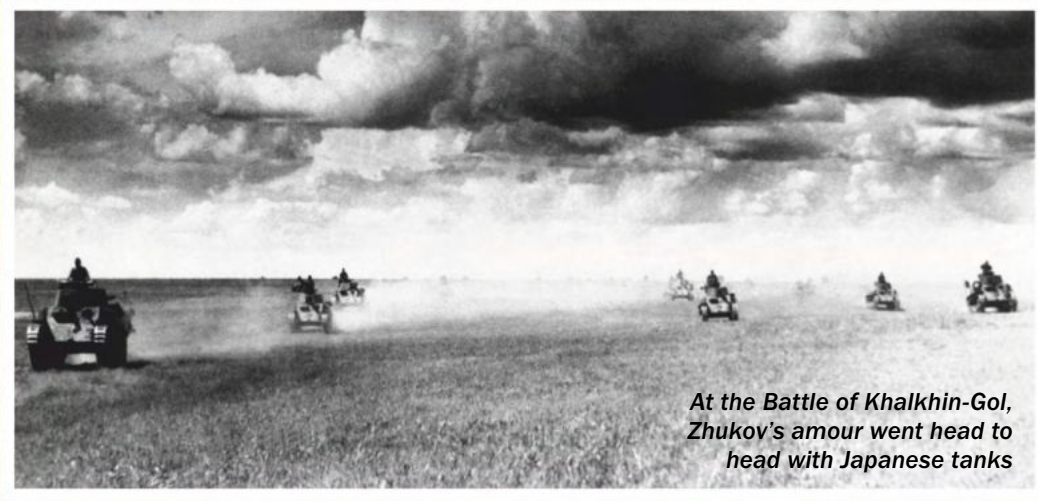


# ZHUKOV'S BLITZKRIEG

## STAGGERING LOSSES WERE INFLICTED ON THE KWANTUNG IN ONE CRITICAL OFFENSIVE

Zhukov's successful pincer operation at Khalkhin-Gol severely mauled the Kwantung. He passed his first major test of high-level command with flying colours. The Japanese claimed they lost 8,440 dead and suffered 8,766 wounded, while the Soviets claimed 9,284 casualties. However, losses for the Japanese have been put as high as 45,000 killed and Soviet casualties well

over 17,000. Certainly of the 60,000 Japanese troops trapped in Zhukov's cauldron, 50,000 were listed as killed, wounded and missing. The Japanese 23rd Division was all but wiped out. The Japanese Air Force claimed 1,200 Soviet planes, which seems improbable and the Soviets 660 Japanese aircraft, which seems equally implausible, in four months of fighting.



Map: © Swanston Map Archive Ltd



immediately replaced by Zhukov. The latter's first move was to request reinforcements for the air force, three rifle divisions and, more significantly, a tank brigade and artillery.

Zhukov, alert to the danger of his forces on the east bank being cut off, ordered a large-scale triple-pronged counter-attack with 450 tanks and armoured cars. Under his command was the 11th Tank Brigade equipped with 150 tanks, the 7th Armoured Brigade with another 154 armoured vehicles and the Mongolian 8th Armoured Battalion armed with 45mm guns. The 11th Tank Brigade, under Commander Yakolev, was instructed to strike from the north, supported by the 24th Motorized Regiment, which pressed in from the northwest supported by artillery under Colonel Fedyuinsky.

In addition the 7th Armoured Brigade, under Colonel Lesovoi, was to attack from the south, supported by an armoured battalion from the Mongolian 8th Cavalry Division.

Heavy guns were moved up from the 185th Artillery Regiment to support the attack on Bain-Tsagan and the 9th Armoured Brigade in the Khalkhin-Gol bridgehead.

### **Zhukov's armoured fist**

At 7.00am on 3 July 1939, the Soviet Air Force and artillery commenced softening up Japanese positions. Two hours later tanks of the 11th Tank Brigade moved up with the full attack being launched at 10.45am. Japanese defences and anti-tank guns were inadequate and Zhukov began to make ground. The Japanese response was to launch a counter-attack on 4 July, but it came to grief in the face of Soviet bombers and artillery.

That night Japanese commander General Kamatsubara gave the order to withdraw and his men were back over the river by 5 July. Their engineers blew the remaining bridges to prevent the Soviet tanks following, leaving many Japanese with little option but to swim for it. Those troops remaining on the eastern slopes of Bain-Tsagan were annihilated.

Although Komatsubara and his HQ got back across the river, hundreds of his men drowned. He left much of his 10,000 strong force behind strewn over the mountain.

In the face of a Japanese counterattack the Soviets held their ground and by 25 July the Japanese, having suffered over 5,000 casualties, gave up. The Japanese counter-attacked again on 12 August and drove the Mongolian 22nd Cavalry Regiment from the Bolshiye Peski height to the south.

At this point it would have been prudent for the Kwantung to call it a day and summon the diplomats, instead more anti-tank gun units were brought up ready for another counter-attack. They planned to attack along a 43-mile front on 24 August, however, the dynamic Zhukov was to beat them to it by four days.

Zhukov's Soviet-Mongolian command prepared for a knockout counter-offensive. Reinforcements were brought up, including two rifle divisions, a tank brigade, two artillery regiments as well as supporting bomber and fighter units. Stalin, conscious that Hitler would be closely watching events in Central Asia, despatched Zhukov further reinforcements. These included three infantry and two cavalry divisions, seven independent brigades,

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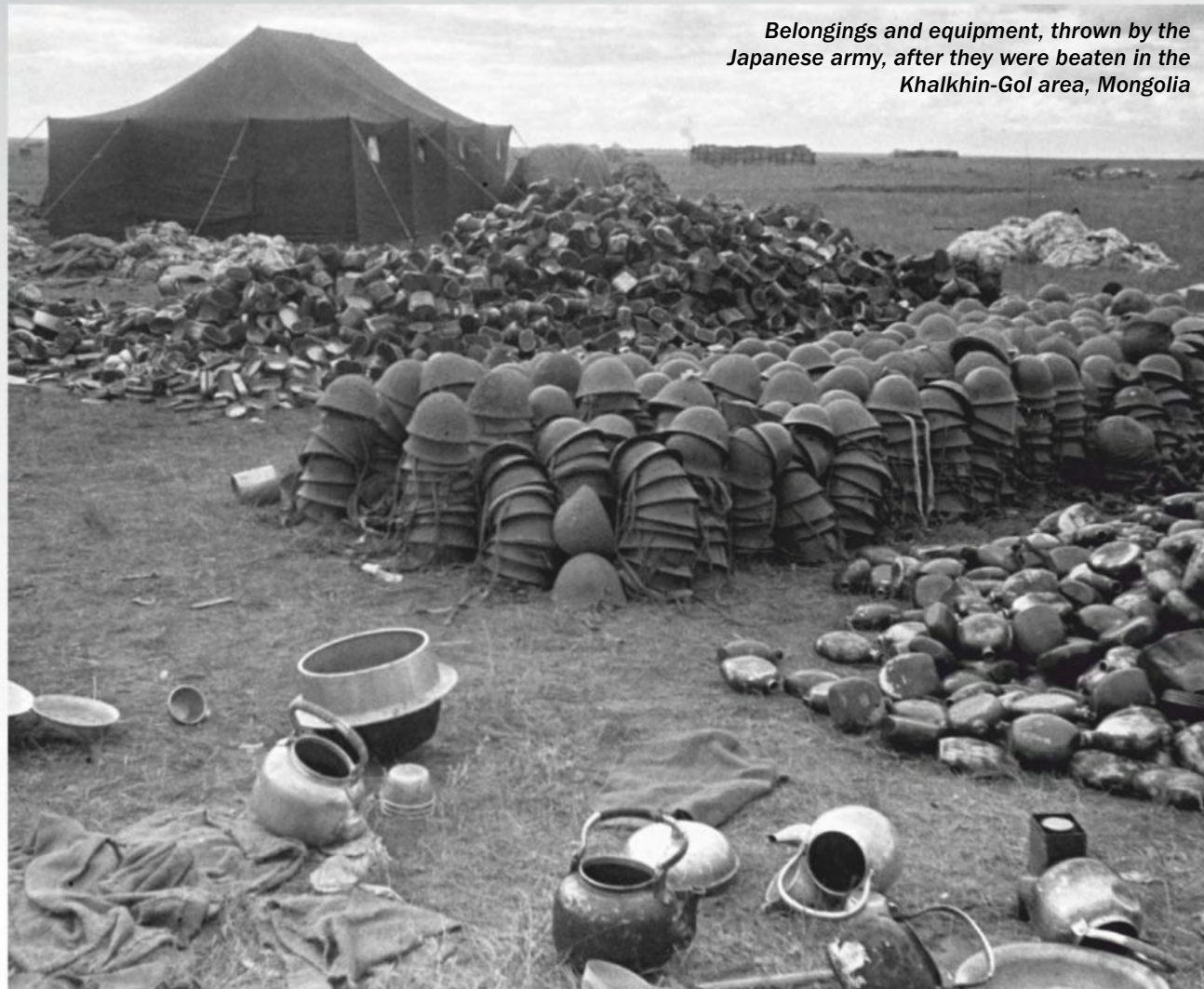
*Marshal Timoshenko and  
General Zhukov during  
military manoeuvres in 1940*



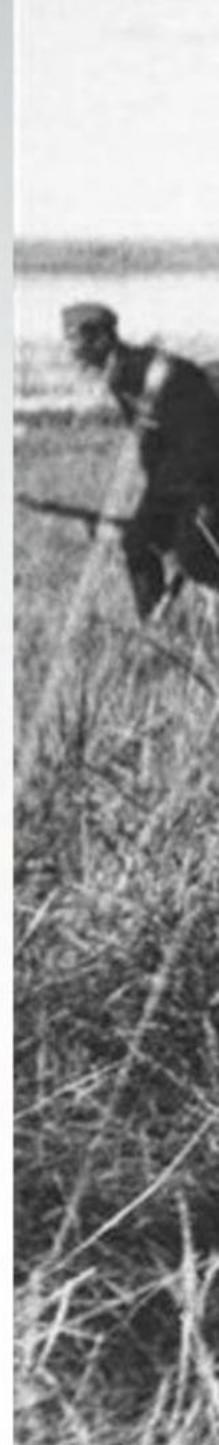
## ZHUKOV: RISE OF STALIN'S GREATEST GENERAL



*Corps commander Georgi Zhukov during the military action at Khalkhin-Gol*



*Belongings and equipment, thrown by the Japanese army, after they were beaten in the Khalkhin-Gol area, Mongolia*



including five armoured, additional artillery and air force units to create the First Army Group. Zhukov had everything that he needed.

By now Soviet reconnaissance aircraft pieced together a good intelligence picture of the Japanese defences. The reconnaissance group from the 149th Motorised Rifle Regiment, under Regimental Commander I.M. Remizov, also provided a steady stream of prisoners for interrogation. Zhukov assessed that the Japanese were most vulnerable on their flanks. He knew that their greatest weakness was their lack of mobility, effective tank units and motorised infantry. This meant they would not be able to respond quickly to any Soviet breakthrough.

Zhukov's armoured fist consisted of the 4th, 6th and 11th Tank Brigades and the 7th and 8th Mechanized Brigades. He planned to encircle the Japanese using his North, South and Central Groups, with his armour on the wings. The Soviets deployed 50,000 troops to defend the east bank and then Zhukov prepared to cross to the west, with three rifle divisions and his armoured forces.

Waiting at their jump off points were 35 infantry battalions, supported by a mobile force of 20 cavalry squadrons, 498 tanks, 346 armoured cars and 502 guns. At 5.45am on 20 August Soviet aircraft blasted the Japanese forward positions, followed by a three-hour artillery and mortar bombardment.

Zhukov's tanks roared forward at 8.45am. By the next day to the south, his forces had swung behind the Japanese reaching the Khalkhin-Gol's east-west tributary, the Khailastyn-Gol. On 23 August the Northern Group, backed by Zhukov's reserves, the 212th Airborne Brigade

fighting as infantry, seized the Palet Heights and swung south. Although trapped, the Japanese resisted to the last.

The two wings of Zhukov's attack linked up at Nomonhan on 25 August trapping the Japanese 23rd Division. The following day Japanese forces outside the pocket tried to get through to them, but were met by Zhukov's 6th Tank Brigade.

The Red Air Force also ensured that the Japanese could not bring up reinforcements. They dropped 190 tons of bombs during 474 sorties during the first week alone. Having trapped the Japanese Zhukov spent a week eradicating the survivors. By 31 August it was all over. Zhukov's strategy had triumphed.

### Feet of clay

On 1 September 1939 Hitler invaded Poland and when the shooting stopped Stalin occupied the eastern half of the country. Behind the scenes Stalin, alarmed by the ease with which the Wehrmacht had crushed Poland in just four weeks, feared that Finland and the Baltic States might provide a springboard for a Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. He imposed a mutual defensive agreement on Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in October 1939.

This involved allowing the Red Army to be based on their soil and in July 1940 they were officially incorporated into the Soviet Union.

Then Stalin invaded Finland on 30 November 1939. Despite Timoshenko's overwhelming victory, the terrible performance of the Red Army greatly influenced Hitler's decision to invade the Soviet Union. Stalin mobilised half his regular divisions in Europe and western Siberia to fight his tiny neighbour. He relied on brute strength, but Soviet troops, whilst brave,

had crucially lacked initiative. Nikita Khrushchev realised the wider ramifications, "All of us – and Stalin first and foremost – sensed in our victory a defeat by the Finns.

"It was a dangerous defeat because it encouraged our enemies' conviction that the Soviet Union was a colossus with feet of clay."

After Khalkhin-Gol, Zhukov singled out his tank brigades, especially the 11th under Yakovlev for praise, as well as the 36th Motorized Division under Petrov, and 57th Rifle Division under Galanin. The 82nd Division, now under Fedyuninsky, was to distinguish itself fighting the Germans, while Fedyuninsky would command the 42nd Army at beleaguered Leningrad. Potapov, who had acted as Zhukov's deputy, ended up commanding the 5th Army.

On the assumption that Operation Barbarossa went according to schedule, the German General Staff had to get their assessments of Soviet manpower, and indeed industrial capacity, right because it was vital they predict the Red Army's response. Accurate intelligence regarding Soviet frontline units and reserves was crucial to the success of the entire enterprise. It was these judgements that convinced Hitler to invade and secondly fight the Battle of Moscow in the winter of 1941-1942, because he believed it would exhaust the depleted Red Army's reserves.

Crucially, thanks to his experiences in the Far East, Zhukov ensured that the Transbaikal Military District sowed the seeds for the Reserve Front that would help defend the western Soviet Union. Zhukov, by the end of June 1941, was anticipating being able to deploy just under 150 divisions running north to south in the Baltic, Western, Kiev and Odessa





Mongolian People's Army  
soldiers at Khalkhin Gol, 1939

Military Districts. The manpower of these units was 50 per cent less than an average German division. The Wehrmacht would have to overcome these, plus at least another 20 regular army divisions being assembled.

Just before Barbarossa commenced, Timoshenko and Zhukov, who by then held the top posts of commissar for defence and chief of staff respectively, did all they could to warn Stalin of the growing threat of invasion. Zhukov was instructed to prepare State Defence Plan 1941. While this was based on the premise that Red Army operations would be in response to Nazi aggression, the idea was to take the fight to the enemy in an offensive rather than defensive manner. Zhukov's defence plan and Soviet mobilisation plans envisaged nearly all the Red Army being deployed in the west.

This meant of the Red Army's impressive order of battle, which comprised a total of 303 divisions, the bulk of them some 237 divisions would be deployed in the west facing the Nazi threat. However, of this impressive overall total, 88 divisions were still in the process of being formed across the breadth and width of the Soviet Union. Stalin's reluctance to mobilise and the logistics involved meant by the summer of 1941 only 171 divisions were in the field in the western Soviet Union deployed in three belts. They were to be strengthened by Stalin's 20 new mechanised corps fielding about 1,800 heavy and medium tanks plus thousands of inadequate light tanks.

As a result only a third of the Soviet divisions were actually in the crucial first defensive echelon. Under such circumstances it was clearly impossible for Zhukov to conduct a forward offensive defence. The reality was

**“HAVING TRAPPED THE JAPANESE ZHUKOV SPENT A WEEK ERADICATING THE SURVIVORS. BY 31 AUGUST IT WAS ALL OVER. ZHUKOV'S STRATEGY HAD TRIUMPHED”**

that the first defensive echelon was little more than a trip wire. To add to the Red Army's difficulties after moving into eastern Poland, it had abandoned and stripped most of the pre-1939 Soviet-Polish frontier defences. This required the construction of new defences in the western areas of the frontier military districts. These new defences were a logistical headache and were not something that could be completed in a hurry.

### **Zhukov saves the day**

According to Zhukov it was General Filipp Ivanovich Golikov, Chief of the Intelligence Directorate, who persuaded Stalin in late March 1941 that Hitler would not attack in the summer. Ironically he produced an accurate report that warned that three German army groups were indeed massing on the Soviet Union's western frontier, which could strike toward Leningrad, Moscow and Kiev between 15 May and 15 June 1941.

Golikov who had commanded troops during the Soviet invasion of Poland and in the war against Finland seemed destined for great

things. Nikita Khrushchev, Stalin's Communist party enforcer in Ukraine recalled, “I'd often seen him in Stalin's presence when he was head of army intelligence.” Later at Stalingrad, Khrushchev was to form the opinion that Golikov was a coward.

Golikov's reports, and similar ones from the Soviet ambassador in Berlin, were sent direct to Stalin, neither Timoshenko nor Zhukov were ever privy to them. “All the information General Golikov had was immediately forwarded to Stalin,” recalled Zhukov. “What I do not know is what intelligence General Golikov laid before Stalin on his own, by-passing the defence commissar and the chief of the general staff, as he often did. Naturally, this could not but affect the final situation analysis.”

This was all part of Stalin's policy of keeping the Red Army compartmentalised and ensuring his generals never had the bigger picture. It meant that he was relying purely on intuition to determine the veracity of the intelligence landing on his desk. The net result was that he did not canvass the opinions of his experienced senior military leaders.

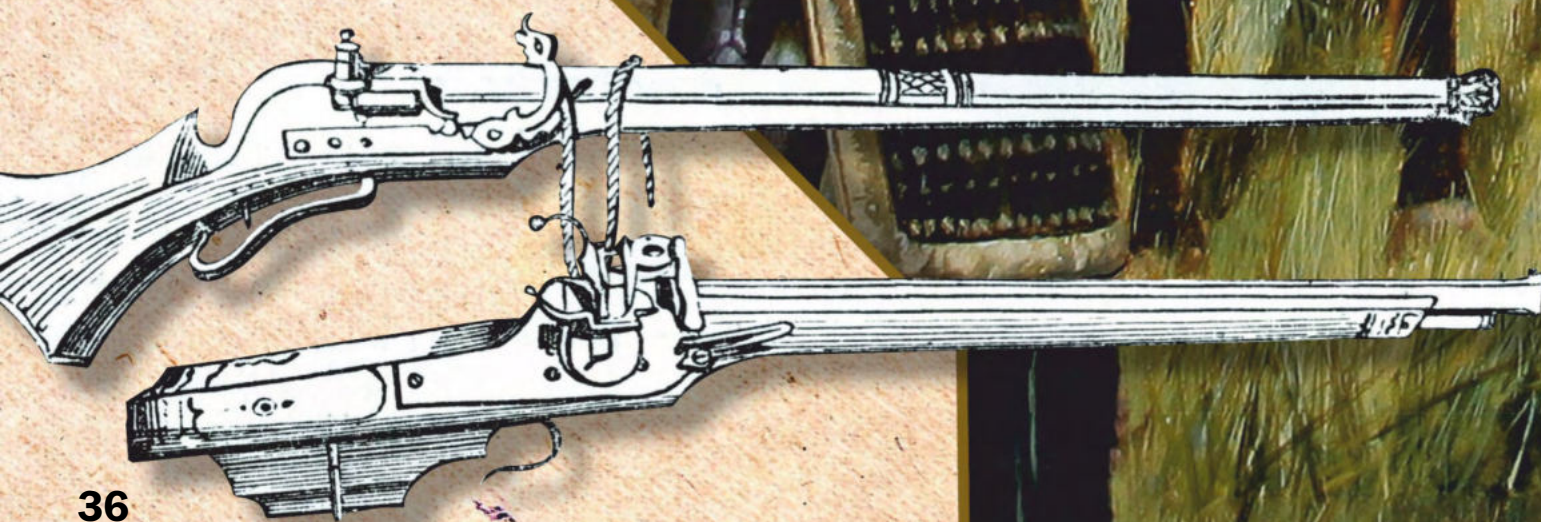
Only in late April 1941 did Stalin acquiesce to Timoshenko and Zhukov's request to mobilise the reservists, as well as re-deploy troops from the Urals, Siberia and Far East to the west. This deployment could not be completed until 10 July – this was to prove three weeks too late. Fortunately for Stalin, when Hitler reached the very gates of Moscow, Zhukov knew what to do. He would save the Russian capital and go on to defeat the Germans at Kursk and Minsk, then crown his remarkable career with the capture of Berlin.





Image: Chris Collingwood

The early arquebus was easy for Japanese swordsmiths to reverse engineer, with the trigger causing a lit smouldering match to drop onto the flashpan







# LAND OF THE RISING GUN

**After decades experimenting with muskets, Oda Nobunaga perfected their use at the Battle of Nagashino, revolutionising not just samurai warfare, but society itself**

WORDS HARETH AL BUSTANI

**I**n 1543 a powerful typhoon blew a Chinese junk off course, washing it onto the subtropical coast of Tanegashima – an island just off the southernmost tip of Japan, ruled by the Shimazu clan. The three Portuguese merchants aboard stepped out, onto a country torn apart. Since the 15th century, the Ashikaga shogunate, a military dictatorship that had once held the country together, had collapsed. Though it remained a symbol of authority in the capital of Kyoto, real power was now splintered between regional warlords, slowly expanding their spheres of influence. In this era of chaos the shogunate, and thereby all of Japan, was just waiting to be taken. But first, one would have to emerge supreme.

Being on the very frontier of Japan did not mean the Shimazu could rest easy. They, too, were locked in a deadly war with for control over the southern island of Kyushu.

The local lord, Shimazu Takahisa, was greatly taken by the unusual-looking Portuguese tradesmen, and their novel wares. After exchanging formalities, the merchants treated him to a display, firing off arquebuses.

The arquebus had established itself as a crucial component in European warfare at the 1503 Battle of Cerignola, in Italy. One of the merchants carefully loaded his gun with a ball and gunpowder, before placing priming powder into the flashpan, and sealing it with a brass cover – to prevent a premature explosion. Then he took a lit six-foot smouldering match, wrapped around his left arm, blew the end into life and stuck it in an S-shaped lever, cocking it back against an external brass spring. Finally, after opening the safety cover, he pulled the trigger, dropping the match down onto the flashpan, igniting the gunpowder and firing off a ball.

Fortunately for Takahisa, who bought as many as he could for well over the market rate,

it did not take long for his master swordsmiths to reverse engineer the simple weapons. They even made some improvements, standardising bores to enable the mass-production of bullets. By 1549 they had already made their way onto the battlefield, when Takahisa successfully besieged Kajiki castle. Another notable milestone that year was the arrival of the Jesuit priest Francis Xavier, in Satsuma. Eager to sow the seeds of Christianity, missionaries began travelling to the country with merchants. As they spread further afield, so did knowledge of the mysterious arquebus, later known as teppo.

Once the country's swordsmiths grew into exceptional gunsmiths, they established 'schools', turning far-flung villages, like Sakai in Kyushu and Kunitomo in central Honshû, into renowned weapons manufacturers.

Orders for the guns, nicknamed tanegashimas, began to fly in from warlords across the country. The smiths of Kunitomo received a huge order of 500 guns from Oda Nobunaga, the young son of a petty chieftain, who caused a sensation the next year, when he paraded them in front of his father-in-law.

Takeda Shingen, the chief of the Takeda clan, based in central Japan, had more reason than most to come to terms with the new technology – having been on the receiving end of primitive Chinese handguns at the battle of Uedahara in 1548, even before the arquebus was first used in battle. Locked in a bitter border dispute, he and his neighbour, Uesugi Kenshin, would go on to fight successive battles on the same battlefield of Kawanakajima for more than a decade.

While combat had traditionally been centred around mounted archery, the development of shock cavalry, using spears to smash through defenceless archers, had prompted a shift in strategy. Armies now incorporated a mixture of spearmen, wielding ten-foot pikes, elite

**“ORDERS FOR THE GUNS, NICKNAMED TANEGASHIMAS, BEGAN TO FLY IN FROM WARLORDS ACROSS THE COUNTRY”**



# NOBUNAGA AND THE MONKS

**ALTHOUGH NOBUNAGA BEHAVED AS A GENEROUS BENEFACTOR TO THE CHRISTIANS, HE WAGED WAR AGAINST BUDDHISTS WITH UNMITIGATED CRUELTY**

By the 16th century, Japan's Buddhist warrior monks had amassed great wealth, influence and power. Chief among them were the Ikko-ikki, or 'single minded' sect.

Self-governing, the Ikko rejected any outside interference, even driving a constable out of the province of Kaga, taking it for themselves.

When the shogun called for an alliance to destroy Nobunaga in 1570, the Ikko-ikki rose up against him – dealing the warlord some shocking defeats. Presented with the gravest of threats, in October 1571, Nobunaga attacked the monastic towns and temples of Mount Hiei, burning everything to the ground and butchering and gunning down every soul in sight – monks, laymen, women and children alike.

At the troublesome Ikko temple of Nagashima, he first starved the 20,000 defenders into submission, and then barricaded and burned them to death. Finally after an 11-year siege, the longest in Japanese history, the Ikko's fortress of Honganji surrendered – narrowly avoiding another wholesale massacre.

After defeating the Takeda clan, Nobunaga is said to have visited the temple that held Shingen's remains and roasted the monks alive. He would later invite the moderate Jodo sect into his castle-town of Azuchi, where he rounded up and executed members of the historically militant Hokke sect. Though he planned to execute the monks of Koyosan temple for harbouring his former enemies, he later acquiesced.

*Nobunaga's bitter campaign against the Buddhist warrior monks were marked by great violence, with 20,000 burned alive at Nagashima*



*Nobunaga's victory at the Battle of Nagashino would go on to revolutionise samurai armies, and society itself*

swordsmen, cavalymen and archers. Despite the changes, for many, battle was still a matter of great ritual, steeped in an inflexible honour code, embodied by the samurai. These knightly soldiers devoted their lives to martial arts, rising to glory atop great displays of ability and bravado on the battlefield. However, the violent nature of the time required generals to swell their ranks, drawing from among the lowest echelons of ashigaru or 'light feet' – peasants who had absconded from their villages, and robbers.

Nobunaga, who had hardly any elite samurai to speak of, recognised the need to not only train and discipline these warriors, but to treat them with respect befitting their growing importance – lest their 'light feet' flee into the enemy's arms. In 1554 he armed a group of his ashigaru and experimented with co-ordinated volleys at the battle of Mureki – firing at the enemy across a moat. He soon learned that even the least able of peasants could be trained to use an arquebus very quickly.

Shingen, whose Takeda clan boasted the most fearsome cavalry charge in all of Japan, took things a step further, dressing all his soldiers in terrifying red uniforms, with rank

delineated by minor details. At the second battle of Kawanakajima in 1555, his army of 3,000 included 300 arquebusiers. Though the opposing generals made peace, to allow their ashigaru to return to the fields, Shingen was so impressed, he ordered 500 more muskets for one of his castles.

Though Kyoto itself would be easy pickings, great powers like Takeda and Uesugi were too busy fighting one another to campaign westwards. However, with the Eastern Sea to his back and no threats to the west, Imagawa Yoshimoto was well positioned to roll the dice. In 1560 he began his march west, invading the neighbouring province of Owari – where the 27-year-old Nobunaga had recently risen to power, overcoming his relatives, and even killing his brother, to become chief.

Capturing two forts with 25,000 warriors, Yoshimoto settled into a narrow gorge to celebrate – by observing all the heads his men had taken. There, having scraped just 3,000 men together from obscurity, Nobunaga struck under a cloak of rain and wind – wiping out the enemy and taking Yoshimoto's own head. Afterwards he allied with one of Yoshimoto's





# THE THREE UNIFIERS

**NOBUNAGA'S QUEST TO UNIFY JAPAN WOULD BE COMPLETED, FIRST BY HIS GENERAL HIDEYOSHI, AND THEN BY HIS EQUALLY REMARKABLE ALLY IEYASU**

After defeating Imagawa in 1560, Nobunaga went on to subjugate a third of the country. Following his death in 1581, his loyal general, Toyotomi Hideyoshi completed his campaign, conquering the Shimazu of Kyushu, and the mighty Hojo of Kanto, prompting the northern provinces to surrender. He rewarded loyalists with land, and uprooted troublesome clans from their homelands. Meanwhile, having forced the shogun to abdicate for monkhood, he ruled under the authority of his own martial

proWess. He later had himself adopted into the Fujiwara clan, so he could serve as imperial regent, before installing a puppet emperor.

Rolling out a series of sweeping land surveys, he reformed taxes, rounded up weapons from all farmers and banned peasants from leaving their villages. He took steps to legally segregate the various classes of warriors, craftsmen, merchants and peasants, and religious institutions too were placed under his central authority. In 1592, drunk on power, he launched an ill-fated invasion of Korea hoping to conquer China, before dying in 1598.

After winning the battle of Sekigahara, his successor, Ieyasu was finally named shogun. The Tokugawa regime implemented even stricter centralisation of authority, micromanaging every aspect of society – from clothing to entertainment – and violently persecuting Christians. As villagers flocked to the city, life became increasingly formalised, as the Tokugawa oversaw more than 250 years of peace.

*Below: Hideyoshi invaded Korea with some 225,000 men, hoping to conquer China*



**“NOBUNAGA HAD RECENTLY RISEN TO POWER, OVERCOMING HIS RELATIVES, AND EVEN KILLING HIS BROTHER, TO BECOME CHIEF”**

vassals, Tokugawa Ieyasu, now a young chief in his own right. The victory lit a fire within Nobunaga, one that would see him conquer his way across to Kyoto just eight years later, installing the dead shogun's younger brother, Yoshiaki, as the new generalissimo – and issuing him strict rules of conduct.

Though Nobunaga continued to experiment with muskets, in 1570 he was on the receiving end of a tactical masterclass. During a siege of the rebellious warrior monks, the Ikko-ikki, as the bells tolled midnight, 3,000 monks emerged from the darkness and fired upon his men all at once – a hail of musket balls that “echoed between heaven and earth”.

Though they lacked training, the Ikko-ikki were numerous, and as early adopters of the arquebus, even ran their own gunsmiths.

That year, Shingen was said to have told his senior retainers, “Hereafter, guns will be the most important.” In 1572, he led an enormous Takeda army of 30,000 against Nobunaga and Ieyasu. Though Shingen's cavalry suffered some losses to Nobunaga's arquebusiers, with the guns taking an average 30 seconds to reload, after the first volley, the horsemen simply mowed through them. Utterly overwhelmed, Nobunaga and Ieyasu fled – the latter almost dying. The next year, Nobunaga again besieged the Ikko-ikki, this time hoping to use their mass-firing squad strategy against them, only to find his guns and gunpowder ruined by the rain. Shingen died soon after, leaving the clan to his son, Katsuyori.

Keen to swoop in and take Ieyasu out of the equation, in 1575 Katsuyori managed to convince a leading Tokugawa officer at the clan's headquarters of Okazaki to open the gate for his army. However, when the traitor was caught and killed, lacking the men to besiege the castle, Katsuyori instead turned

to the small mountain fortress of Nagashino, in Mikawa province.

Making haste, Nobunaga and Ieyasu rushed to relieve the castle with 38,000 men. Eager to neutralise the Takeda's notorious cavalry charge, Nobunaga chose a battlefield three miles west of the fortress. He picked an uneven plain, stationing his left flank against forested mountains, stretching a mile out, behind a shallow stream with steep banks, with a river to the right. Then, 50 metres from the stream, he had his men erect three layers of wooden stakes, too tall for horses to leap over, staggered in a zig-zag pattern. It rained that night, but this time Nobunaga made sure his men kept their guns and powder dry.

Although Katsuyori only had 15,750 men, he believed that his 4,250 horsemen could absorb Nobunaga's volley – which he assumed would be dulled by the rain – and go on to smash through the enemy lines, allowing his foot soldiers to swoop in and wreak havoc, just as they had before. Nobunaga arranged 3,000 gunners three rows deep and placed each unit under the command of his finest samurai. As he looked on in magnificent o-yoroi armour, white banners



# COMMODORE PERRY

**WHEN THE AMERICANS VISITED JAPAN WITH A FLEET OF STEAM SHIPS, THE GULF IN TECHNOLOGY PROMPTED A RADICAL DRIVE TO MODERNISE THE NATION**

In 1635, eager to fight the subversive power of foreign influence, the paranoid Tokugawa regime banned anyone from travelling or sending ships abroad. While its cities underwent rapid economic growth and cultural development, by the 19th century, Japan had technologically been left far behind its Western counterparts – who had undergone an enormous maritime expansion.

When the Americans sent a pair of warships to request a trade agreement with the Tokugawa in 1845, they were turned away. However, they returned in 1853, with four magnificent, black steam warships, churning out black smoke. As the Japanese looked on in awe, Commodore Matthew Perry advised that if they did not agree to a treaty, he would return with a larger fleet. True to his word, he came back with nine ships the next year, with more than 100 mounted guns and 1,800 crewmen. This time, the Tokugawa agreed to an unfavourable treaty – opening up Japan for further deals with European powers.

Crucially, the incident revealed to the Japanese just how far they had fallen behind. Soon after, the shogunate would be overthrown, and the emperor restored his prerogative powers – sparking off a period of rapid modernisation. By the early 20th century, the country would become a military superpower, paving the way for World War II.

*The sight of Perry's steam-powered Black Ships shocked the Japanese into submitting to an unfavourable treaty, preceding a period of rapid modernisation*



**Right: Commodore Matthew Perry**



*Oda Nobunaga's rise to greatness began with a defeat over the invading army of Imagawa Yoshimoto, who outnumbered him 12 to 1*

**“AS THE TAKEDA PUSHED FORWARDS, NOBUNAGA’S ARQUEBUSIERS RETREATED, AND A SECOND LAYER FIRED A FOLLOW UP VOLLEY”**

fluttering behind him, the Takeda emerged 200 metres away from the forest. One hour later, Katsuyori threw the full weight of his cavalry towards the enemy, to the sound of war drums. Terrified, Nobunaga’s men held their fire, kept in check by their veteran squad leaders.

As the horsemen hit the stream, their momentum slowed and as soon as they emerged from the other side, Nobunaga’s men launched an almighty volley, felling several horses and punching holes into their riders, like tiny bolts of lightning.

As the Takeda pushed forwards, Nobunaga’s arquebusiers retreated, and a second layer fired a follow up volley, and then a third. The string of three successive waves of musket balls devastated the Takeda charge. Wave after wave of horsemen were torn apart in the same manner, clamouring over increasing piles of bodies. In the ensuing hand-to-hand combat, the Takeda clan itself was all but destroyed.

It was an epoch-defining victory. The gunners alone had not won the day – it had taken an eight-hour battle to rout the outnumbered enemy. However, Nobunaga had neutralised the Takeda’s elite trump card, using soldiers drawn from the lowest rungs of society. His use of three ranks of arquebusiers was unprecedented, and would not be repeated again – with subsequent armies only managing two. The rapid nature of samurai warfare also meant that spear ashigaru would

take the place of fortifications, forming a ‘ring of steel’ around the gunners.

Nobunaga capped his revolutionary victory with a fortress unlike any that had come before. Azuchi Castle rose 600 feet over Lake Bewa, with unprecedented stone walls, fitted together without mortar, thousands of feet long and 70 feet high, as well as a 96-foot-tall central tower. Within, it featured intermittent citadels, to give defenders more cover to fire behind.

The year after Nagashino, he led an army of 180,000 to wipe out the Takeda. His ability to field such enormous armies, controlled from a central command, fuelled the construction of larger castle-towns.

In 1582, having conquered one-third of Japan, while his army was away, Nobunaga was attacked by one of his own generals. Rather than die by the hand of treason, he committed seppuku – cutting his own belly open. Toyotomi Hideyoshi would go on to avenge his master before seizing power for himself, and unifying the rest of the country. By now, roughly one-third of most armies were composed of gunners, and armour was constructed of solid plate body armour, rather than individual scales laced together, to better repel bullets. Remembering the danger that arquebuses had posed in the hands of the untrained Ikko-ikki, in 1588 Hideyoshi confiscated all weapons from non-samurai. After his death, Ieyasu defeated Hideyoshi’s son at the epic 1600 Battle of Sekigahara, finally becoming shogun.

The Tokugawa regime took Hideyoshi’s centralisation of authority to an obsessive degree. In 1607 they limited all firearm and gunpowder production to the city of Nagahama, forbidding gunsmiths from travelling, or sharing trade secrets. All gun orders would be processed from the new capital of Edo, modern Tokyo, but so few gun orders were approved that many gunsmiths switched back to swords. Meanwhile, the government’s policy of isolationism made it virtually impossible to buy any from abroad. Ironically, the gun had ushered in a new era of unity and peace, one in which it was surplus to requirements.



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# AN AMERICAN IN EUROPE

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WORDS TOM GARNER

WWII veteran Pete Shaw describes his fight through a devastated continent from Normandy, through the Battle of the Bulge, to Dachau

*Two American soldiers  
silhouetted against the  
night sky by an artillery  
barrage during the Battle  
of the Bulge*





**D**uring World War II, millions of Americans fought on the Western Front in Europe. With the Allies under the overall command of Supreme Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Americans contributed by the far the most resources, including manpower. From the beaches of Normandy to the liberation of concentration camps in Germany, US forces advanced to free country after country from Nazi tyranny.

Among these US soldiers was Harry 'Pete' Shaw. A corporal in the 283rd Field Artillery Battalion, Shaw fought across the continent between June 1944-May 1945. Providing vital logistical support to frontline troops, he witnessed terrible bloodshed from Utah Beach to the snows of the Battle of the Bulge as well as the unspeakable crimes of Dachau concentration camp. Now a decorated and honoured veteran, Shaw describes his personal experience of the Allied advance that freed nations and changed history.

### "We had to go"

Born in 1924, Shaw was in high school in Pennsylvania when Pearl Harbor was attacked in December 1941. The shock of the Japanese attack on the Hawaiian naval base persuaded Shaw and his friends to join the armed forces, "We were just reading and learning about the war beforehand. It was even studied in school

and we were talking a lot about it. After Pearl Harbor we couldn't wait until we graduated because we'd then be old enough to join up. I figured we had to go in and do our part."

Shaw's motivations were partially personal, "I came from a town that was more of a farming community and everybody was very close. I also had some really good friends who were in the navy at Pearl Harbor and there were at least 11 of us who signed up right away. My mother was hesitant but we had to go. We enlisted in December 1942 but we were only 17."

Although Shaw's first choice was to join the US Navy, he was colour-blind and he instead joined the US Army aged 18 on 21 May 1943. After being assigned to the artillery and taking an IQ test, Shaw was informed that he was eligible for officer training or an Army Specialized Training Program (ASTP). Despite the opportunity of serving with a higher rank, Shaw declined to become an officer, "If you went with that offer it was 90 days before they made a lieutenant out of you. I didn't want to be a so-called '90-Day Wonder' so I went for specialised training instead."

Shaw's ASTP training took him down an unexpected route, "I thought it was good because I assumed I'd train in radar or something important. However I was sent to a gas and chemical warfare school in Kansas. I said, 'Why would you send me there?' and



Image: Harry 'Pete' Shaw and Memoirs of WWII

Above: Pete Shaw pictured during his wartime service in the 283rd Field Artillery Battalion

**"FROM THE BEACHES OF NORMANDY TO THE LIBERATION OF CONCENTRATION CAMPS IN GERMANY, US FORCES ADVANCED TO FREE COUNTRY AFTER COUNTRY FROM NAZI TYRANNY"**



they replied, 'You're the only one that's really qualified because you took all the sciences and algebra at school.' That was it, I learned about mustard gas and chemical warfare and then had to go back and teach it."

Learning about chemical warfare was essential due to its previous widespread use during World War I, "It was believed that the Germans would gas the Allies. A lot of people don't know this but for the first three months of the war we wore gas masks. This was until it was decided that gas wouldn't be used and we stopped wearing them."

## Preparing for an invasion

Shaw subsequently joined 283rd Field Artillery Battalion as a corporal. An independent unit, 283rd was soon deployed overseas. After crossing the Atlantic Ocean, Shaw completed his training in South Wales where he was struck by the landscape, "Hollywood had made a movie called *How Green Was My Valley* and it was the most beautiful country I had ever seen. That was where we were headquartered but we also went to London and even Ireland to get supplies. This was because when our ships left America they never went to the same place twice so that U-boats couldn't track them. When it was time to go to Europe we had all the supplies ready loaded. We distributed what was needed to the firing batteries and everything was set."

Shaw also recalls that relations between the American forces and the British population were cordial, "They were good and the majority were tickled to death that we were there."

The 283rd were only a small element of the huge preparations for the invasion of France in



*Above: Shaw and his friends in high school decided to enlist in the American armed forces following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor*

early June 1944. Shaw remembers the tense delays, "Eisenhower put out the codeword for the invasion, which was 'Overlord'. We waited four days for that to come on. If the Germans knew that we were backed up seven miles to go aboard they could have bombed us and there would never have been an invasion. The weather was so bad and you could not see a thing. You couldn't even see your hand in front of you because of the fog and the rain."

## Normandy

The invasion finally began on 6 June with 283rd sailing over to Normandy eight days later onto Utah Beach, "We were the third wave because we were a mechanised division. Because we were in the artillery we didn't do that much on the beach but there were so many scars from

what was done there. It was a pitiful sight, especially when we saw Omaha."

The savagery of the fighting on the American beaches just over a week before was a grim introduction to the war for Shaw and his comrades, "Even though we were late, we saw a lot of evidence for what happened and we couldn't get off fast enough. We were told that if we saw any bodies we had to take their dog tags and put them in their mouth. You wore dog tags around your neck but you would open their mouth and stick them in so that they would know who that soldier was."

Now operating in a deadly combat zone, 283rd got to work. The battalion consisted of A, B and C Batteries along with two other batteries for servicing and headquarters. Shaw was assigned to the Service Battery, "The Headquarters Battery was responsible for doing all of the communications. The other batteries, including ours, would go ahead and we'd service all the ammunition, food and clothing, and so on. Our Service Battery was on the road 24 hours a day and we couldn't move in daylight a lot of the time because we would be bombed. We often worked at night and provided service to whatever was needed at the front."

Performing this logistical work at night was further hampered by intentionally low visibility, "In my group there were three trucks, which three of us drove. It was called a 'brigade' but there were only three of us. When we travelled at night there were no headlights on the vehicles apart from a little light called a 'cat eye'. It was half an inch wide and an inch long and the drivers knew that if he let that light get a little too far ahead of him, he was on his own."



*US Sherman tanks hide in a Normandy hedgerow, August 1944. In reality, German tanks were much better at concealment in the bocage*



# THE CAPITAL OF RUINS

## THE BATTLE OF SAINT-LÔ WAS SHAW'S INTRODUCTION TO THE DEVASTATING IMPACT OF WWII ON EUROPEAN CITIES

In 1944 Saint-Lô was a strategically important Norman city where a number of major roads intersected. If the Allies could take it then it would allow them to access the entire region and provide a route to advance towards Paris. The Germans also knew its importance and in July 1944 they fought a bloody battle against US forces.

Saint-Lô had already been bombed several times by Allied bombers before the battle began. Fierce fighting also took place in the bocage and hills around the city for almost a fortnight. It took the combined efforts of four US divisions to break through the German defences and the Americans suffered bloody casualties of over 11,000 men. Because of devastating aerial bombings and artillery bombardments, 95 per cent of Saint-Lô

was destroyed. This led one American soldier to grimly quip, "We sure liberated the hell out of this place."

The battle was also Shaw's first major engagement with 283rd. Fighting as part of an artillery battalion, he and his comrades felt terrible about the destruction that units like theirs had to inflict. Saint-Lô was a depressing introduction to similar scenes that were repeated across the continent, "It was hard to know what we had to do, and particularly to know what was going to be destroyed, but some of the buildings had to come down. Many of these towns were so beautiful but they had to be destroyed to get the Germans out. That was a tough situation to take, even though we knew we had to do it."

**"BECAUSE OF DEVASTATING AERIAL BOMBINGS AND ARTILLERY BOMBARDMENTS, 95 PER CENT OF SAINT-LÔ WAS DESTROYED. THIS LED ONE AMERICAN SOLDIER TO GRIMLY QUIP, "WE SURE LIBERATED THE HELL OUT OF THIS PLACE"**



An aerial view of Saint-Lô after it was virtually destroyed. The Church of Notre-Dame de Saint-Lô can clearly be seen because it was one of the few buildings to remain standing

*Because Saint-Lô was almost completely obliterated in 1944, Samuel Beckett named it the 'Capital of Ruins'*









**“ALLIED LOSSES, THE VAST MAJORITY OF THEM AMERICAN, NUMBERED APPROXIMATELY 90,000 MEN WHILE THE GERMANS MAY HAVE LOST 100,000. IT WAS THE LARGEST AND BLOODIEST SINGLE BATTLE FOUGHT BY THE UNITED STATES DURING THE WAR”**



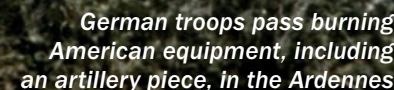
*Members of an American field artillery battalion dig in along a Belgian road to hold ground against German counteroffensives in the Ardennes*



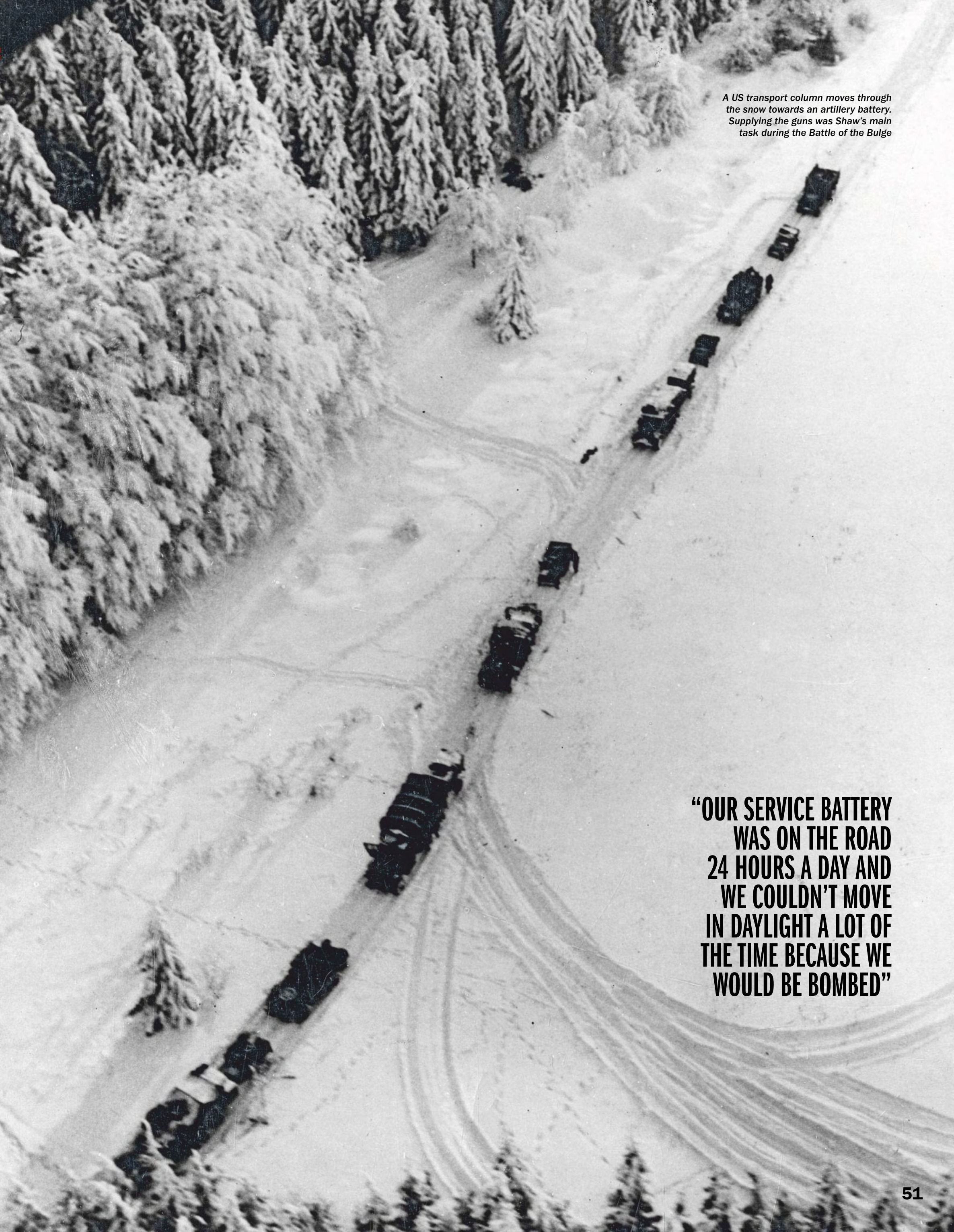
**Shaw largely served in forces commanded by George S. Patton and saw the famous commander several times during campaigning**

After Paris the Allies advanced through northern France into Belgium and Luxembourg. It was here that the fighting intensified again for 283rd under the command of George S. Patton, "We had a lot of battles there and although I never met Patton, I was twice within 100 yards of him when he would wave from a Jeep. In the Ardennes he moved so fast that he went back into the lines. He called up 105mm guns and said, 'I'm not

Shaw's feet were crushed, "My feet were in sand and they dug them out from at least a foot. The shoestrings were broken on my shoes so both feet were smashed and the left foot was broken. I was in hospital for 14 days with that injury and I'm still having problems with it!"





An aerial black and white photograph showing a long line of military trucks and transport vehicles moving along a snow-covered road that winds through a dense forest of snow-laden evergreen trees. The vehicles are arranged in a single file, stretching from the bottom left towards the top right of the frame. The road is marked with numerous tire tracks in the snow. The surrounding forest is thick and appears to be covered in a heavy layer of snow.

*A US transport column moves through the snow towards an artillery battery. Supplying the guns was Shaw's main task during the Battle of the Bulge*

**"OUR SERVICE BATTERY  
WAS ON THE ROAD  
24 HOURS A DAY AND  
WE COULDN'T MOVE  
IN DAYLIGHT A LOT OF  
THE TIME BECAUSE WE  
WOULD BE BOMBED"**



Despite his wound, Shaw would have little rest as his battalion was about to be plunged into a wintry nightmare in the Ardennes.

### The Bulge

Sometimes called the Ardennes Counteroffensive but more commonly known as the Battle of the Bulge, this huge and bloody campaign was the last major German offensive on the Western Front during WWII. Launched through the forested Ardennes region of eastern Belgium, northeast France and Luxembourg, the Germans' objectives were ambitious.

The offensive was intended to stop the Allies' use of the port of Antwerp and to split their lines. If this was achieved the Germans aimed to encircle and destroy four separate armies and force the Allies to negotiate a peace treaty that was favourable to Germany. Fought between 16 December 1944 and 25 January 1945, the Germans initially achieved total surprise and American forces bore the brunt of the assault. The 'Bulge' was the large gap initially created through Allied lines by the offensive and it would be prove difficult to close.

At the battle's peak the Germans deployed almost 450,000 men while the Americans were significantly outnumbered at the beginning. US forces were eventually brought up to over 600,000 men and the offensive was effectively

## "HITLER WANTED TO PROVE THAT HE WASN'T DONE FIGHTING. THAT'S WHY HE BROUGHT IN ALL THESE SOLDIERS FROM DIFFERENT FRONTS. THEY INCLUDED GERMAN KIDS WHO WERE ONLY 15-16 YEARS OLD"

broken by 27 December 1944. It took another month before the Allied frontline was restored to its original position.

Shaw remembers the scale of the American forces, "The 2nd, 3rd, 7th and 9th Armies were all there and they all had a part to play. That's not even counting divisions such as the 42nd and 147th, who also played a big part. There were so many that I can't even remember them all."

The 283rd joined the battle four days after it started where it was divided, "We went into Luxembourg and Bastogne and that's where most of our fighting was. We were transferred at that time and they split our outfit up because it was getting smaller. I went into the 690th Field Artillery Battalion and that was when we re-supported Patton."

The Bulge became notorious for the extremely cold winter conditions that the soldiers fought in, "It was freezing weather and

I'd swear it was ten below zero for seven days in a row. When it was cold over there, you froze and when we took our shoes off we wrapped our feet in blankets."

Unlike other troops who had to travel on foot, Shaw was lucky to have some comparative shelter, "The advantage we had was that we were mobilised. We had a truck but the guys who didn't had to walk and sleep in tents. We were at least blessed by having a vehicle. If we saw guys along the road we'd pick them up if we weren't carrying supplies or only had a few. We'd let them get in the truck to thaw them out as much as we could. We didn't have doors on the vehicle so some of them would stand on the running boards or climb up on the sides to stand."

As well as the weather Shaw had to contend with the Germans who fought a desperate but hard battle, "Hitler wanted to prove that he wasn't done fighting. That's why he brought in



★  
GEORGE S. PATTON  
REFERRED TO THE RED  
BALL EXPRESS AS "OUR  
MOST IMPORTANT  
WEAPON"

The GMC CCKW 'Jimmy' truck had a five-tonne cargo capacity and could be easily repaired, although it often suffered from burst tyres and had an average working life of less than a year



all these soldiers from different fronts. They included German kids who were only 15-16 years old at the Bulge.”

The casualty figures for the Bulge are disputed but nevertheless huge. Allied losses, the vast majority of them American, numbered approximately 90,000 men while the Germans may have lost 100,000. It was the largest and bloodiest single battle fought by the United States during the war. For Shaw, his immediate environment was enough for him to believe the figures, “At the time we didn’t know that many were killed but we were thinking, ‘My God, it’s all you’re seeing.’ The Bulge was certainly the most severe fighting as far as we were concerned.”

## Dachau

After the Battle of the Bulge, Germany’s strategic reserve on the Western Front was exhausted and the Allies were finally able to invade the country in late March 1945. Shaw was part of the advance into Upper Bavaria a month later when his unit received orders that did not initially appear unusual, “3rd Army called down to our headquarters and said, ‘Close to where you are, there is a supplies depot. You go in.’ Our outfit went in but I stopped the trucks right away and said, ‘There’s something wrong, this is no supply depot.’ This was because there was only one

German vehicle and we didn’t see any soldiers.” Shaw’s outfit had chanced upon something far sinister, “There was a big flue sticking up about 30 feet and there was smoke coming out of it. We then looked to the south of that building and saw a big trench.

“We said, ‘What is that?’ before a shot was fired from inside the building. Of course, the five guys in the truck got out real quick and we blasted rounds from a machine-gun into the air. Five Germans came out with their hands over their heads but five more decided to run. What we had found was Dachau.”

Opened in 1933 Dachau was the first purpose-built concentration camp intended for permanent use in Nazi Germany. It was not designed as an extermination camp, although it was still a place of extreme horror where more murders of political prisoners were committed than at any other Nazi camp.

Over 40,000 of approximately 200,000 people imprisoned there were killed by the time American forces liberated Dachau on 29 April 1945. By this time Dachau’s camp system had grown to include almost 100 sub-camps. At its liberation there were still approximately 30,000 prisoners held at the sites.

Shaw was only 19 when he and his comrades liberated their part of Dachau, “You couldn’t believe it. There were cattle cars filled with

Germans that didn’t sympathise with Hitler, crippled children and German Jews who were half dressed and half dead. The trench was twenty-foot long, four to five-foot wide and five-foot deep, and it was filled with bodies.”

The liberated prisoners also informed the Americans about the camp’s gas chamber, “We liberated 127 people and two of them could talk a little English while another spoke German to a guy in the outfit who knew the language. They told us they had been about to have a ‘shower’ before they were transferred. However they realised something was up because they hadn’t seen anybody come out of the shower.”

To prevent people attempting to deny the existence of the concentration camp, the Americans filmed official footage, “The army red-taped the area and when the Nuremberg Trials came up that film was in there.

“A lot of people who had heard about Dachau then said, ‘Now we believe it’ but it was nothing compared to Auschwitz.”

The war in Europe ended shortly after the liberation of Dachau but Shaw believed that he would be redeployed to the Pacific Theatre, “They were going to send us to Japan but Harry Truman stopped that when he dropped the atom bomb. When he dropped the second one we were instead told, ‘Guess what, fellahs? We’re going home, the war’s over’.”

# THE RED BALL EXPRESS

## SHAW PARTICIPATED IN THIS FAMOUS CONVOY SYSTEM THAT SUPPLIED OVERSTRETCHED ALLIED FORCES

Before D-Day, the Allies were acutely aware that victory in Western Europe would depend on a permanent supply of fuel, ammunition, food and other materials for the front lines. The bombing of the French railway network handicapped the Germans but it also meant that the Allies were largely dependent on transportation by road.

During the Normandy Campaign, the Allies were able to build up supplies but after the breakout there was a huge advance across France. George S. Patton in particular aggressively sped across the country into Belgium but the US Army soon began to run out of fuel. Large quantities of petrol were now far from the front and Patton emphasised its importance, “My men can eat their belts but my tanks gotta have gas!”

Men and trucks were brought together from different units to run on specially designated roads to quickly move the supplies. These routes were marked by red ball signs, which gave the convoy its nickname ‘The Red Ball Express’. From 25 August 1944 approximately

12,500 tonnes of supplies were carried each day to the constantly changing frontlines. At its peak the Express operated almost 6,000 vehicles (mostly GMC CCKW ‘Jimmy’ trucks) and three quarters of its personnel were African American soldiers. Although they suffered from discrimination, these men would overload their trucks and exceed the official speed limit to get supplies through, despite frequently coming under fire.

By the time the Express ended on 16 November 1944, when the port facilities at Antwerp became open, drivers completed an average round-trip that could be as long as 600 miles. Nevertheless the convoy had done its job with Eisenhower calling it the “lifeline between combat and supply”.

Shaw was one of those who participated in the Express with 283rd and remains enthusiastic about its success, “It was awesome. They used all the trucks they could to go back into France to get supplies because there was no gas for the tanks or ammunition. It was 24 hours a day and each truck had three drivers and four ammunition handlers to go in to all these places. We went back almost as far as Normandy!”

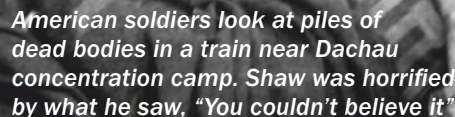


*It is estimated that the Red Ball Express transported over 400,000 tonnes of materials to the Allied front lines*



*Corporal Charles Johnson of 783rd Military Police Battalion waves on a convoy near Alençon, France, 5 September 1944*





A photograph of an elderly man in a military uniform, likely a World War II veteran, wearing a brown jacket, a peaked cap, and a medal around his neck. He is looking off to the side with a serious expression. The background shows a crowd of people and a banner with stars and stripes.

*American troops gather in front of Notre Dame Cathedral. Shaw visited Paris's most famous church after the city was liberated*

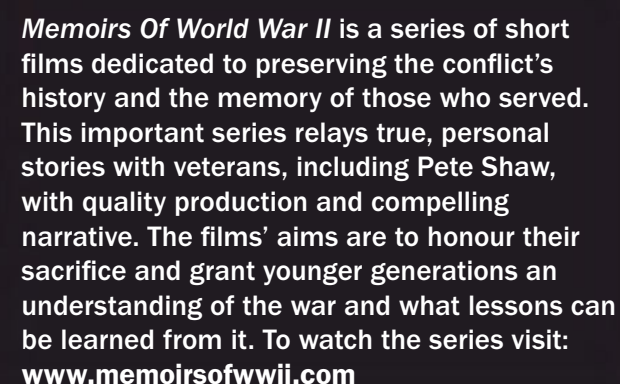


Despite his heroic actions, Shaw remains modest about his recognised courage, “If they documented it, then you got the medal. I don’t know of any soldier that wouldn’t do what he had to do. He did it because he wanted to do it.”

Three quarters of a century after his military service Shaw regularly gives talks about his experiences during the war. He is also touched at how veterans of the conflict are now received by young people, "It's unbelievable how many young children in the USA are taught about WWII and the veterans in school over the last ten years. No matter where I go, I always wear my WWII veterans' cap and many of them come up and say, 'We want to congratulate you for your service.' That never happened 20 years ago."

**Images: Alamy, Getty**

However the most poignant moment for Shaw was when he visited the graves of friends he had lost in Normandy, "It's really gorgeous the way the French keep up the cemeteries, which are well manicured. I've got buddies that are there and they had me place wreaths on the tombs. They all saluted and it was wonderful that I could see their graves but I couldn't just walk off. I said to my buddies, 'You're still going to be here, but you'll be going back in my heart'."





# FREQUENT VISITS TO THE BATHROOM?

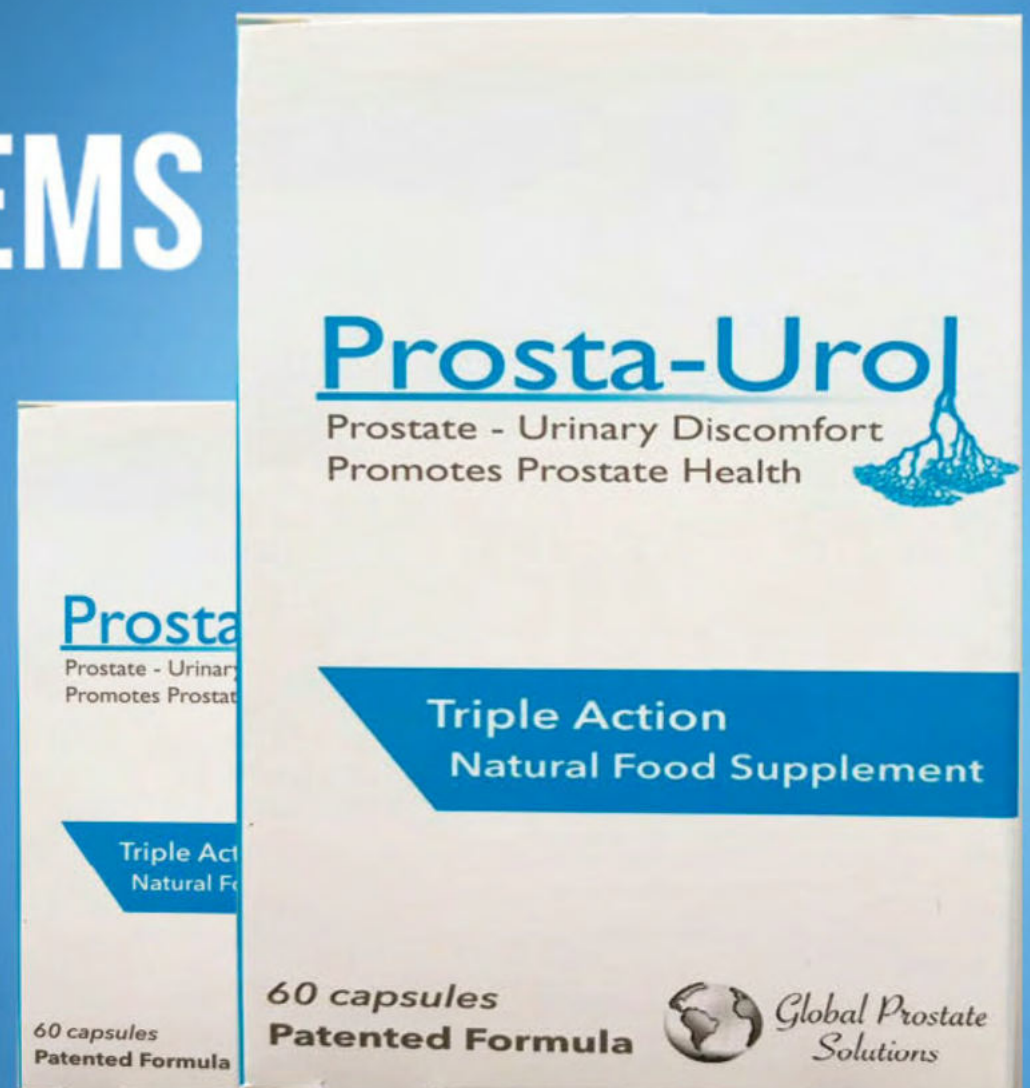
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**“ALFONSO CUT HIS TEETH IN  
THE RELIGIOUS WARS BETWEEN  
CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS BATTLING  
THE MOORS OF GRANADA”**

## ALFONSO XI KING OF CASTILE AND LEON

Alfonso XI 'The Avenger' wears a gold crown on his head and holds in his right hand a royal sceptre, both of which signify his rule over the kingdoms of Leon and Castile that were united in 1230.

The king's left hand rests on a knightly sword. He wears a flowing white cape that bears the yellow castle with three towers representing Castile and the lion representing Leon. Underneath his cape he wears a red and yellow surcoat. His legs are protected by gold greaves.

By turning back the Marinid Dynasty of Morocco's attempt to expand north across the Strait of Gibraltar at the Battle of Río Salado in 1340, Alfonso ensured the forward momentum of the Reconquista.



# ALFONSO THE AVENGER

WORDS WILLIAM E. WELSH

King Alfonso XI of Castile vanquished a Moroccan army bent on rolling back the Reconquista during his dynamic 14th century reign

**T**he mounted vanguard of the Castilian army streamed down from its hilltop position shortly after dawn on 30 October 1340, and fought its way across the narrow bridge over the Rio Salado. The lightly armoured Moors reeled under the blows of the heavily armoured Christian knights' lances, swords, and maces. Twenty-nine-year-old Castilian King Alfonso XI watched with satisfaction as the cream of the Castilian royal army drove the Moors towards a string of hills south of the river. As part of the Reconquista, Alfonso hoped to crush the Moroccan-Granadan army that had assembled for battle that day.

Alfonso became king when he was just a year old, in 1112 upon his father's death. Castile quickly became embroiled in a contentious civil war among loyal royals and rebellious magnates that left its southeastern border vulnerable to the ravages of the Moors of Granada. When he reached his majority on his 14th birthday on 13 August 1325, Alfonso set about strengthening royal authority.

He did so both by increasing the power of the Castilian parliament, as well as the vibrant townships of the realm at the expense of the aristocracy. He used both skilful persuasion and military force to stamp down the rebellion. However, it would flare up again.

Alfonso cut his teeth in the religious wars between Christians and Muslims battling the Moors of Granada. One of his early victories was the capture of the town of Olvera on the Granadan frontier in 1327 following a short siege. At the start of his reign, Castile controlled the ports of Tarifa and Gibraltar on the Straits of Gibraltar, but did not control the large port of Algeciras, which was situated opposite Gibraltar on Algeciras Bay.

Nasrid King of Granada Mohammed IV was hard pressed to match the power of Castile and its allies in the Iberian Peninsula, and he handed

over Algeciras to the Maranids of Morocco in 1328 in exchange for military support against Castile. The Maranids were elated because this gave them a port through which to funnel troops into the Iberian Peninsula.

## Crusade of 1330

Alfonso succeeded in 1328 in getting Pope John XXII to issue a crusading bull in effect for four years against the Moors in Iberia. The pope instructed the archbishop of Seville and the bishops of Cordoba and Jaen to bestow the cross of the crusader on both Castilians and Christians from other lands. The pope stipulated that Alfonso must lead, in person, an offensive crusade against the Muslims.

In July 1330 Alfonso led his crusaders south from Cordoba. His goal was to capture the Castillo de la Estrella (Castle of the Star) in the foothills of the mountains of Ronda near the town of Teba. The Castilians rolled siege engines into place and pioneers began building siege towers to assail its walls. Six thousand Moors arrived to defend the Granadan frontier, and the two sides took up positions facing each other across the Guadateba River.

The following month the commander of the Nasrid army tried to ambush the crusaders by launching an attack with 3,000 troops and concealing another 3,000 in an adjacent valley. The ambush failed because Alfonso was familiar with Muslims tactics and did not fall prey to the feigned retreat when the Moors retreated after a

successful Castilian mounted charge. Having driven off the relief army, Alfonso's troops breached the castle walls on 30 August.

## Fall of Gibraltar

In keeping with the terms of his alliance with Granadan King Mohammed IV, Maranid Sultan Abu I-Hassan Ali dispatched his son, Abu Malik, at the head of 5,000 troops, to join forces with the Granadans in attacking Gibraltar in 1333.

After landing at Algeciras in February of that year, the Moroccans rendezvoused with the Granadans and then laid siege to the town of Gibraltar. At the time Alfonso was bogged down fighting rebellious magnate Don Juan Manuel and therefore could not march to its relief. After resolving his dispute with Juan Manuel in June, Alfonso marched south from Seville with the intent of driving

**Right: Alfonso's victory at Rio Salado ended the Maranid Dynasty of Morocco's attempt to reverse the Reconquista**





off the besiegers. Unfortunately, the starving Castilian garrison surrendered before he could engage the Muslims.

Alfonso attempted to retake the city, but the Moroccan garrison proved too strong. When the Castilians attempted to mine the walls of the town, the Moroccans dropped stones down upon the miners and poured boiling pitch on them. The Moroccans also burned the Castilian siege towers. When a Granadan relief force camped near his army, Alfonso reluctantly gave up and withdrew.

Alfonso spent the years immediately following the fall of Gibraltar building the strength of his royal army. He did this by actively promoting chivalry and strengthening the recruitment process. To increase the number of knights and the size of his mounted force, he promoted 'popular knighthood', a concept practised in Leon that he applied to Castile. The program required individuals at a certain threshold of wealth to serve in the Castilian army and furnish their own weapons, armour, and horse.

Alfonso also set minimal standards for arms and equipment for both infantry and cavalry. To ensure that his knights were ready for battle, he encouraged them to participate in tournaments. One of his most notable and enduring achievements was the establishment of the Order of the Band, one of the earliest monarchical chivalric orders in Europe.

## Moroccan Offensive

War between Castile and Morocco heated up again in 1339. To roll back the Reconquista, Sultan Hassan-Ali declared a jihad against the Christians of the peninsula and sent his son Abu Malik to Al-Andalus with 8,000 Moroccans to capture Tarifa, the sole remaining port on the Straits of Gibraltar in Castilian hands. The Maranid sultan also arranged for Granadan King Yusuf I, who had succeeded Mohammed IV, to contribute 18,000 Moors to the offensive.

While the Moroccan-Granadan army was encamped on the Alberite River on its march to Tarifa, Alfonso launched a stunning surprise attack against it at dawn on 20 October. In the confused fighting, Abu Malik was slain trying to rally his disrupted troops. The setback incensed Sultan Abu I-Hassan, who began raising a new army to revive his flagging offensive against Castile.

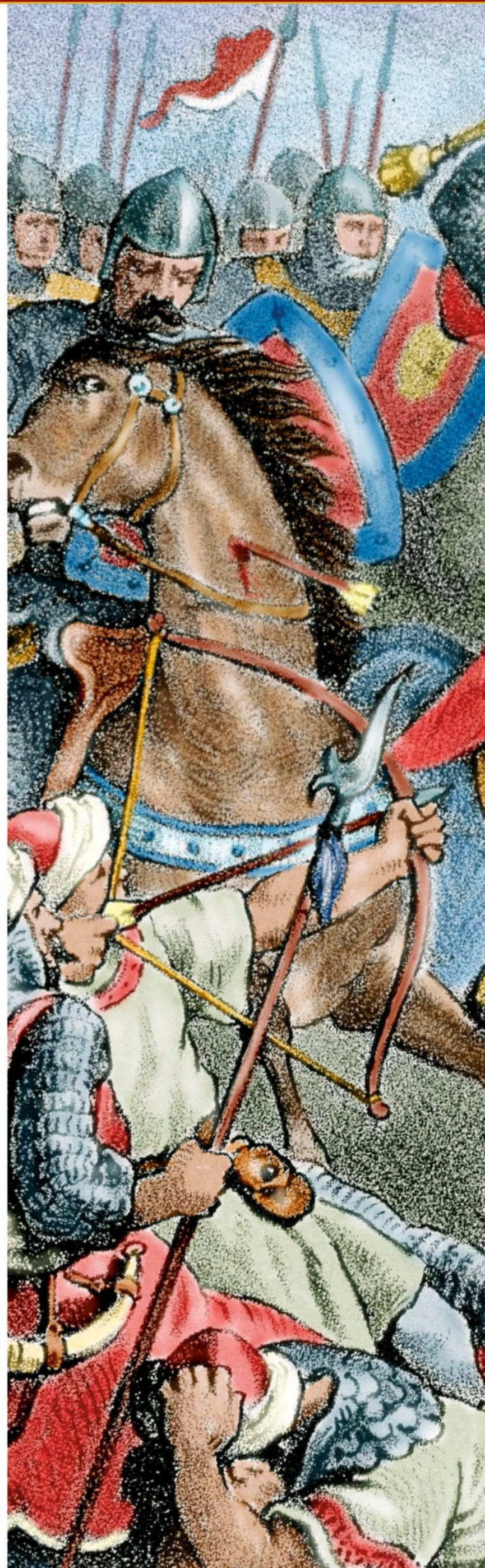
Alfonso again appealed to the Papacy to issue a crusading bull. In response to his request Pope Benedictine XII proclaimed a three-year crusade in March 1340 for all of the Christian kingdoms in the Iberian Peninsula. As the natural leader of such a crusade, Benedictine sent Alfonso a papal banner to carry into battle to inspire the crusaders. To counter the Moroccan jihad Alfonso and his father-in-law Afonso IV of Portugal assembled a crusader army that included troops from all of the Christian kingdoms of Iberia.

The Moroccan sultan crossed the straits in August 1340 and besieged Tarifa on 23 September. His nearly two dozen siege engines bombarded the fortress around the clock, eventually knocking down a section of its walls and one of its stone towers.

Alfonso was determined to force the Moroccans to raise their siege. When one of his senior advisors suggested he abandon the port to the enemy, the Castilian king said he would never abandon Tarifa if he could help it. The two Christian kings led the crusader army south with the intention of relieving the city in late October. Upon the approach of the crusader army, Abu I-Hassan raised the siege in order to bring the full strength of the Moroccan-Granadan army against the crusaders.

## Battle of Rio Salado

The Castilian-Portuguese army encamped five miles northwest of the port on a 1,400-foot hill overlooking the Rio Salado. Alfonso's first step



One of Alfonso's earliest campaigns was in 1330 against the Moors' Castle of the Star on the Granadan frontier



**“ALFONSO’S VICTORY EARNED HIM FAME THROUGHOUT CHRISTIAN EUROPE. HE HAD DEFEATED A FORCE NEARLY THREE TIMES THE SIZE OF THE CRUSADER ARMY”**

*King Alfonso XI soundly defeated a Maranid-Granadan army at Río Salado in 1340*





*King Alfonso XI strengthened the Castilian parliament and municipalities to limit the power of the aristocracy*



was to dispatch 5,000 troops to reinforce the 1,000 Castilian troops in Tarifa. This left 22,000 troops with which to engage the Muslim host.

The 60,000-strong Moroccan-Granadan army arrived shortly afterwards and encamped on a string of hills south of the river. Both sides were eager for battle. The Portuguese king took up a position on the Christian left opposite Yusuf I of Granada's corps. Alfonso deployed on the Christian right opposite the Moroccans led by Abu I-Hassan and Abu Umar, the commander of the Tarifa contingent.

When Alfonso rode forward to watch his heavy cavalry as it overwhelmed the Muslim army on 30 October, a Moroccan archer fired an arrow that nearly struck the king in the abdomen. The arrow struck his saddle with such force that it stuck to it.

The Archbishop of Toledo, who was riding alongside the king, urged Alfonso to return to the safety of the rear. But Alfonso had no intention of riding to the rear. Instead he spurred on his horse and led his troops in a fresh charge against the retreating Moors.

"Santiago and Castile!" he shouted, and the crusaders continued their advance. To the north, Portuguese King Afonso, having already driven off the Granadans, led his troops in an attack on the Moroccan right flank and rear. The Moroccan sultan tried in vain to rally his troops, but was swept away in their headlong retreat. The Castilians stopped to plunder the sultan's camp, thus allowing a sizeable part of the Moroccan-Granadan army to escape intact.

Alfonso's victory earned him lots of fame throughout Christian Europe. He had defeated a force nearly three times the size of the crusader army. In so doing, he ruined Abu I-Hassan's dreams of one day entering Seville in triumph. The Maranids never launched

another offensive in Al-Andalus after their humiliating defeat at Rio Salado.

## Siege of Algeciras

Alfonso besieged Algeciras two years later with crucial naval support from Genoa, Aragon, and Portugal. Algeciras was the most heavily fortified of the three major ports on the Straits. Its Moroccan garrison was protected by high walls with towers at regular intervals. Alfonso established his base northwest of the city and sent a blocking force to contain the Moroccan garrison at Gibraltar on the east side of Algeciras Bay.

The siege formally began on August 1342. After sustained bombardment of the city over many months, the Castilian army tightened the siege in early 1343. Alfonso was content to starve out the garrison rather than conduct a costly assault on the heavily fortified town.

It was difficult for the Castilian monarch to maintain the siege, though, for he ran out of money to pay the Christian navy and provisions to feed the Castilian ground troops.

Just when it seemed he might have to quit the siege, Pope Clement VI sent word that the Papacy would give Alfonso 20,000 gold florins. What's more, King Philip VI of France promised shortly afterward to furnish 25,000 gold florins. These funds enabled Alfonso to continue the siege.

Although the Moroccans received a small amount of supplies by fast boats that ran the blockade, by the end of 1343 they were starving. A Moroccan-Granadan relief army arrived in the region in November 1343. Alfonso attacked it on 12 December 1343 in an engagement known as the Battle of Rio Palmones. The Castilian heavy cavalry smashed and routed the Muslim horsemen just

as they had at Rio Salado. This time, though, they chased after the retreating Muslims and then cut them to pieces.

In January 1344 the Christian fleet off Algeciras deployed a floating barrier that prevented the Moroccan fast boats from running the blockade. The Moroccan garrison surrendered two months later.

Alfonso entered the city in triumph on 28 March after the gruelling 19-month siege. A sustained period of peace followed with the Moors of Granada avoiding war now that they faced the might of Castile alone.

In early 1350 Alfonso besieged Gibraltar, the last Maranid stronghold in the Iberian Peninsula. Fortune seemed to be against Alfonso for an outbreak of plague swept through the Christian camp. Although he was advised to raise the siege, Alfonso so desperately desired to recover the strategic port that he refused to raise the siege. He succumbed to the plague and died on 26 March. His greatest contribution to the Reconquista was preventing the Maranids of Morocco from establishing a firm foothold in southern Iberia.



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## THE PHANTOM MENACE

ALTHOUGH THE HISTORY OF BRITISH AVIATION can boast many famous aeroplanes amongst its ranks, there can be few that were as visually striking as the mighty Phantom FG.1s of the Royal Navy, which operated from the diminutive deck of HMS Ark Royal. In the seconds prior to launch and whilst connected to the ship's steam catapult, the aircraft's nose wheel oleo would be extended to its maximum 40 inch position, giving the Phantom a distinct nose up attitude to increase the efficiency of engine thrust. With steam rising eerily from the ships deck, Navy Phantoms looked like a giant metal praying mantis, ready to spring into action at a moment's notice. With maximum afterburner selected and the engine power almost melting the ship's deck, the Phantom was finally released from its shackles and roared into the air

– such a spectacular experience for anyone lucky enough to see it. Although most of us will have only ever seen the operation of Ark Royal's Phantoms on video or in reference books, these iconic images left such an indelible impression that Britain's Rolls Royce Spey powered Phantoms have since become something of an enigma and still command huge enthusiast interest to this day.

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# HILL 262



WORDS MARIANNA BUKOWSKI

Normandy, August 1944. As Allied forces are closing in, the German Army is in headlong retreat. At their last remaining escape route, a narrow passage at Hill 262, stands the 1st Polish Armoured Division

In August 1944, wave after wave of German assaults crashed against Hill 262 near the hamlet of Coudehard. It was here that Polish soldiers held their ground in a resolute stand, against odds that seemed beyond all military tactics. Afterwards, the location would pass into history as 'Maczuga' – 'The Mace'.

With the fall of France in June 1940, 'Sikorski's Tourists', the Polish troops nicknamed so after surviving elaborate journeys across Europe and beyond since the invasion of Poland, now looked to reach the shores of Britain to enable their continued fight in the war. Amongst them were officers and veterans of the 10th Motorized Cavalry Brigade and their commander General Stanislaw Maczek. Upon reaching Britain, Maczek vowed to rebuild his brigade – and in 1942 Commander in Chief General Sikorski appointed him commander of the 1st Polish Armoured Division. With a distinguished military record behind him, General Maczek possessed a great military intellect and foresight – he was not interested in static trench warfare, but envisioned battle in terms of attack and withdrawal. His early concepts of mobile warfare proved ground-breaking and by 1944, he was the most experienced commander of armour in Normandy.

The division's emblem was a helmet with wings shaped like those worn by the legendary

armoured cavalry of ancient Poland, the Winged Hussars that came to defend Europe at the Siege of Vienna in 1683.

The spirit and tradition of these historic Polish cavalry regiments, charging on horses in heavy armour, would now continue with the 1st Polish Armoured Division. Stationed in Scotland, the division was never at full strength, and exact numbers vary depending on sources. However, by the spring of 1944 it stood at about 836 officers and 13,402 NCOs and privates. The division's equipment consisted of 381 Sherman and Cromwell tanks, 473 artillery pieces and 4,050 motor vehicles.

Following the Allied landings in France on 6 June, the division was to form part of the second echelon, and relocated from Scarborough to Aldershot in July.

After departing from Tilbury Docks and safely crossing the English Channel, the division arrived in France on the 1st of August 1944, the very same day that Warsaw, proud capital of long suffering Poland, erupted in the heroic uprising against the occupying Germans.

The division would not have to wait very long for its own baptism of fire. Assigned to the Canadian II Corps, forming part of Field Marshal Montgomery's 21st Army Group, they were soon up against the superior German army's Panther and Tiger tanks.

## OPPOSING FORCES



**POLAND**

**LEADERS:**

Stanisław Maczek

**INFANTRY:**

1,500

**TANKS:**

80

**VS**



**GERMANY**

**LEADERS:**

Walter Model

**INFANTRY:**

Remnants of around

20 Infantry and

Panzer divisions

## Hill 262

The Germans, all too aware of the ever-closing net around them, proved as dangerous an enemy in their retreat, as they had in the years of blitzkrieg advance. Their fate in Normandy would be decided by the battles to come against three Allied forces, all converging around the towns of Trun, Chambois and the hamlet of Coudehard.

Facing a desperate enemy, the US, Canadian and Polish troops moved in from the north and south, prepared for intense fighting where co-ordination to avoid friendly fire, and the ability to switch from fluid action to defensive battle, would prove crucial.

*The view from Mont-Ormel, now the site of a memorial museum*

**“GENERAL MACZEK POSSESSED A GREAT MILITARY INTELLECT AND FORESIGHT – HE WAS NOT INTERESTED IN STATIC TRENCH WARFARE, BUT ENVISIONED BATTLE IN TERMS OF ATTACK AND WITHDRAWAL”**





A devastated German column in the aftermath of the battle



A German soldier lies next to a destroyed half-track near Mortain



On the 17 August, following the unsuccessful Operation Totalize, Montgomery ordered the 1st Polish Armoured Division to take Chambois, where it was to join up with the 90th US Infantry Division and close the only remaining gap for the Germans to withdraw north and east to safety. To achieve this objective the 10th Mounted Rifles were dispatched via Louvagny and Barou to Trun, whilst the 2nd Armoured Regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Koszutski was sent to a position 15km northeast of Trun. Identifying the value of high ground to provide a strong defensive position, Maczek directed the 1st Armoured Regiment, under the command of Major Stefanowski towards two hills, 262 North and 262 South, which together formed the Mount Ormel ridge northeast of Chambois. Historian Evan McGilvray notes that Maczek had a "horror" of map references, and preferred codenames which all of his officers could immediately recognise. Studying a map, the contour lines of the ridge of Hill 262 reminded Maczek of the shape of a mace, a medieval bludgeon known as a 'Maczuga' in Polish. It was a name that would pass into history.

**“The cork”**

After the war, Montgomery, commander of the ground forces in Operation Overlord, wrote, “Under Falaise we locked the Germans like they were in a bottle and the Polish Armoured Division was the cork in this bottle.”

**“STUDYING A MAP, THE CONTOUR LINES OF THE RIDGE OF HILL 262 REMINDED MACZEK OF THE SHAPE OF A MACE, A MEDIEVAL BLUDGEON KNOWN AS A ‘MACZUGA’ IN POLISH. IT WAS A NAME THAT WOULD PASS INTO HISTORY”**

Advancing on a parallel line to the north of the 4th Canadian Division, whilst manoeuvring across exceptionally difficult terrain, the Polish regiments had been engaged in continuous fighting and gone many nights without hot food and sleep. As 19 August dawned, a combat group under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Stefanowicz, composing of the 1st Armoured Regiment, the Podhalian Rifles and a squadron of tank destroyers continued their advance – with engines roaring in the steep climb along the western slope up to the ridge and the summit of the 'Mace'. Suddenly, appearing on the road in front of them was a seemingly endless column of German vehicles in retreat. Tanks, guns, motorcars and horse-drawn carts – all loaded up with men and equipment, moving at the painfully slow pace set by starved and worn-out horses.

Stefanowicz’s 50 guns  
and 100 machine-

guns opened fire upon the Germans. “The men riding on top of the tanks, trucks and carts disappeared in a twinkling,” observed Quartermaster Jan Marowski. “German material burns very easily,” he noted. Some German tanks, trapped inside the now demolished column, tried to offer resistance, yet it was in vain. As rain began to fall and the smoke settled over the bodies of dead men and horses amongst the wrecked vehicles, white flags of surrender began to appear.

**Maczuga – The Mace**

By the evening of 19 August, their objective was reached. Two-thirds of the 1st Polish Armoured Division, were now positioned on the Mace – the 1st and 2nd Armoured regiments, the 8th and 9th Polish Infantry Battalions, the Polish Highland Battalion and supporting anti-tank and anti-aircraft detachments.

That night, as lieutenant Wielogorski laid down by his tank to sleep, Marowski recollected, “When he woke a few hours later next to him lay a soldier also wrapped up in a great coat, but the colour of the coat was field grey. A German!” Turns out, the

*An injured British soldiers receives medical aid next to a burning German tank*





German had approached at night to surrender, but in fear of being shot in the dark, decided to lay down next to the first sleeping soldier he came across – who happened to be Squadron Commander Wielogorski.

As morning broke, there was movement in the bushes below. Germans were trying to squeeze through at the foot of the Mace. Once the Poles replied with fire – white handkerchiefs signalling German surrender would pop up – just as German anti-tank shells began to whistle by. These unusual circumstances and nerve-testing pattern of violent assault and sudden surrender, would repeat and escalate in the coming days, as the number of Germans taken prisoner kept increasing. Arriving in an almost uninterrupted stream, the German prisoners were held together in a clearing, under the watchful guard of 3rd Company standing ready to fire in any direction.

From the vantage point of the bare hilltop, the 1st Armoured Regiment had a clear view of Germans trying to bypass the Mace below. Some of the German soldiers were so exhausted and dazed, that they seemed oblivious to the bullets fired by Polish-held Brownings in their direction. Others returned the fire – at unarmed Polish supply vehicles attempting to break through the ensuing havoc. In the chaos, three German Panthers took advantage – and in close range duels between German 88mm versus the Polish 75mm guns – unleashed deadly fire against five Polish Shermans.

With German forces flowing in waves, only to break against the Polish foothold at the Mace,

it took no time for the German command to realise their route was blocked.

Sporadic fire soon turned into pounding artillery, as the Germans seriously began their attempt to drive away the Polish units preventing their escape route. German artillery and mortar rained down. The sound of them being discharged reminded the Polish soldiers of a coffee grinder – a crackling noise upon which everyone plunged headlong for cover and then listened intensely at where the screeching missiles that followed would fall.

And fall they did. Indiscriminately – on Polish troops, the tanks and also on the German prisoners held in the clearing. After each barrage of shell fire came another German assault.

When the German 7th Army's attempts to break through and escape Normandy became evermore desperate, the Polish units stood defiantly against the assaults and held their ground. The Polish defensive positions were said to resemble the walls of a medieval fortress – with tanks as towers and infantry interspersed between them. Command was decentralised and each battle group, consisting of an armoured regiment and attached infantry, defended its own section. At the widest point the position was about two kilometres across and the tank battles were fought at very close range. The fighting was ferociously brutal as the remnants of the SS divisions mounted desperate assaults, resulting in continuous hand-to-hand combat.

General Maczek likened the situation to the Polish division taking a raging bull by the

horns and mounting it as it picked up speed, further enraged by the Canadians and British thrashing at its sides. He points out that the image is not meant as criticism of the Allies, rather as an illustration of how “war likes to create such paradoxes”.

Throughout the grinding onslaught, as one combat group followed another and the German 7th Army furiously threw themselves at the ridge, the Polish units held on. Everything was at stake. Standing alone, surrounded by enemies, their wireless messages requesting support were left unanswered. No help was coming. The nearest Canadian 4th Armoured Division was also involved in battle and could not come to their assistance. Alone, and completely surrounded as shells came in from all directions, the Polish soldiers on the Mace withstood fierce fire under one simple, yet immensely difficult, command, “You must hold on.”

### The Little Castle

As the Polish troops on the Mace were cut off – there were no ambulances to evacuate the wounded and as the battle continued, more and more injured men were brought up to what became known as ‘The Little Castle’, a dressing station located on the northwestern side of the slope. In *With The Tanks*, Jan Marowski's account of the 1st Polish Armoured Division, published in 1946 under the pen name K. Jamar, he describes how the ‘castle’ was in fact just an ordinary farmhouse, and only got its inspired name from the brick foundations that raised the building





GREAT BATTLES

on one side. Here, and under the apple trees growing below, doctors worked without respite – “amputations were carried out, blood was transfused and splints applied to the open fractures of limbs”. Suddenly firing started at close range. Panthers! A German assault had begun aiming straight at the unarmed dressing station. Disregarding all Red Cross markings, German bullets “rained on the dressing station in a continuous shower”. Advancing easily at first when unopposed, the German attack was soon halted as the Poles returned fire. Two Panthers burst into flames and “three burnt SS men crawled up to the medical orderlies, whom they now appeared to distinguish easily enough. ‘Hilfe Kameraden’ they implored”.

A Polish battlefield

In the morning of 20 August, the 1st Polish Armoured Division held three areas. At Chambois were 10th Dragoons, 24th Uhlans, an anti-tank Squadron and II Battalion/358th US Infantry Regiment. At Hill 113, north of Chambois were the 10th Mounted Rifles with two anti-tank squadrons. On the Mace were two tank regiments, three infantry battalions and one anti-tank squadron.

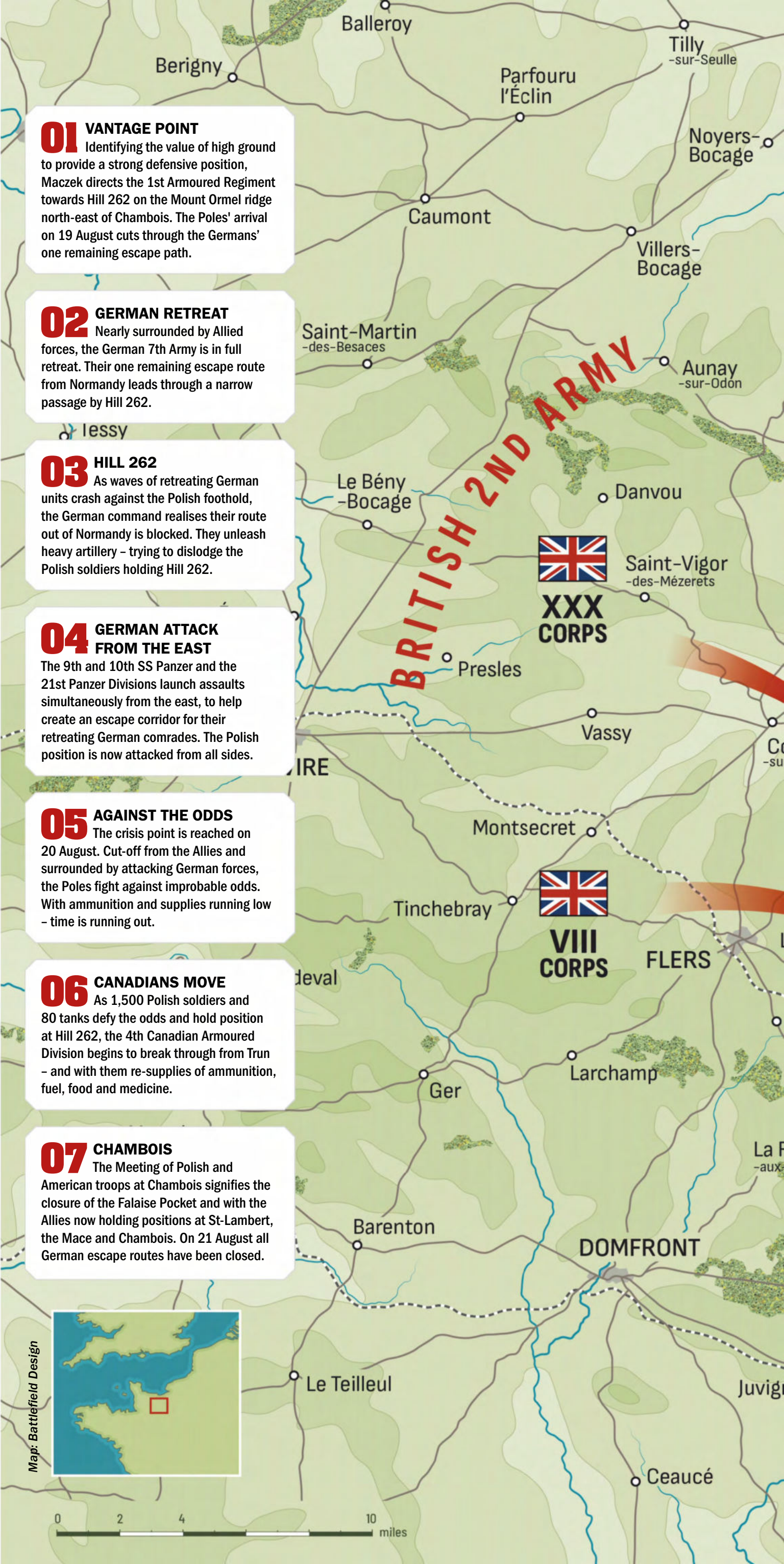
In his memoir, *From Carts To Tanks*, General Maczek describes 20 of August as “the day of crisis for the Polish Armoured Division”. Having thrown in all the remaining units he could into the battle, Maczek writes of only being left with the ability to provide moral support to the commanders of different units over the radio and trying to coordinate help from the outside with Canadian artillery support and airdrop supplies.

A sniper’s bullet killed Major Jan Maciejowski, commander of the 10th Mounted Rifle Regiment, of whom Maczek writes touchingly, “At this moment, I would not be able to write something adequate in honour of this knightly commander, only repeat the words of his adjutant, ‘Since this morning, he was no longer alive – but we felt, that he still led us in battle throughout the day’.”

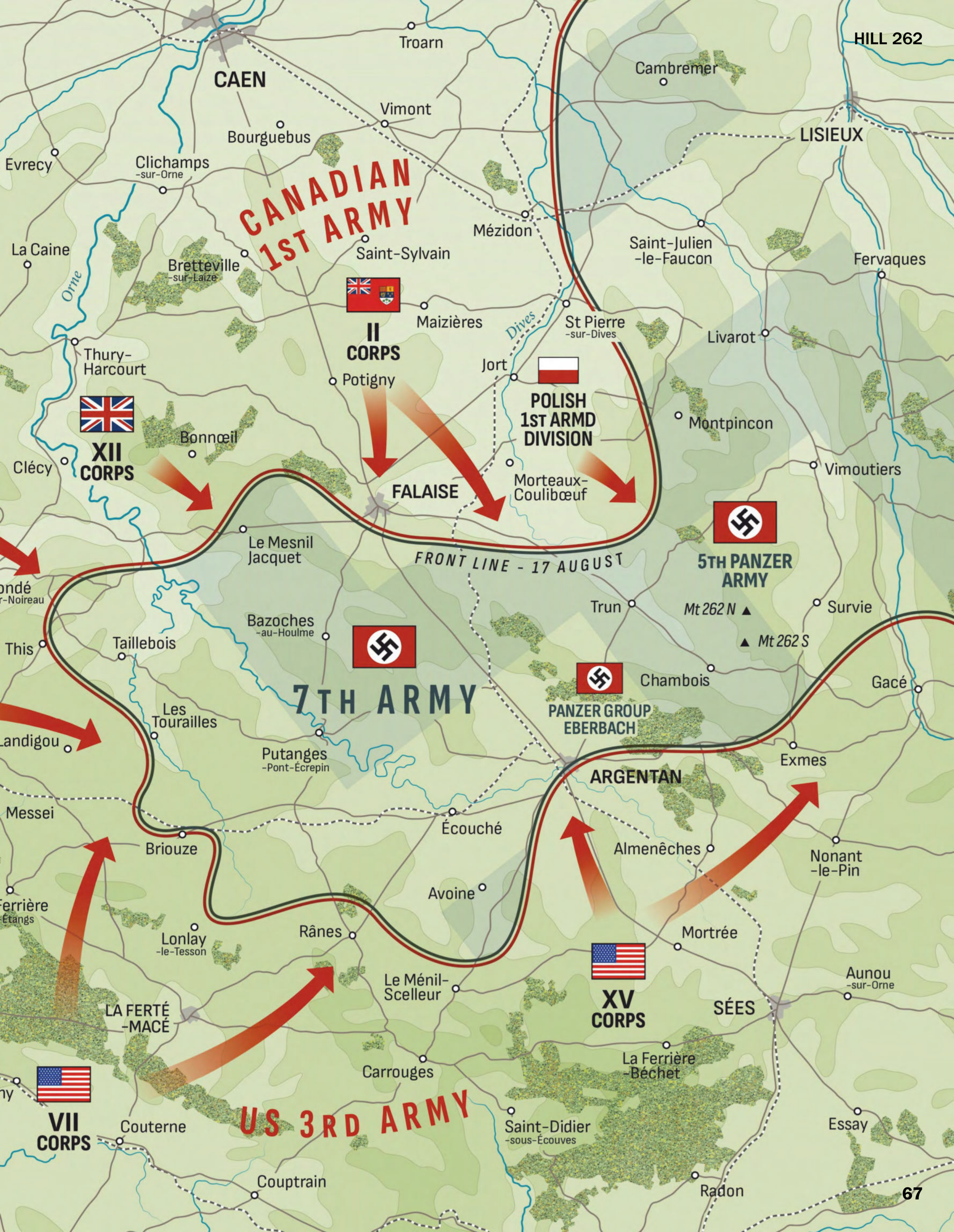
With the 9th and 10th SS Panzer and the 21st Panzer Divisions launching assaults simultaneously from the east, to help create an escape corridor for their retreating comrades, the Polish positions were surrounded by attacks from all sides.

Wounded during the day’s fighting, Stefanowicz addressed his remaining officers with heart-breaking words, “Gentlemen, all is lost. I do not think that the Canadians can come to our rescue. We have only about 110 able-bodied men left. Five shells per gun and 50 bullets per man. That’s very little, but

“SURRENDER TO THE SS IS FUTILE; YOU KNOW THAT. I THANK YOU. YOU HAVE FOUGHT WELL. GOOD LUCK, GENTLEMEN. TONIGHT WE SHALL DIE FOR POLAND AND FOR CIVILISATION!”











*Lieutenant Klaptocz of the 1st Polish Armoured Division converses with his American opposite number after the battle*

fight all the same. Surrender to the SS is futile; you know that. I thank you. You have fought well. Good luck, gentlemen. Tonight we shall die for Poland and for civilisation! Each tank will fight independently, and eventually each man for himself.”

As the German assault continued relentlessly Polish ammunition stock was running low. Should the following day prove anything like the previous, without reinforcements and ammunition reaching them in time, the Poles would simply no longer have any means of beating back the oncoming Germans.

“The firing continued without interruption, all around sounded the crackling noise of machine gun fire and the bullets beat on the leaves of trees like raindrops,” recalled Marowski. As night fell, without anything to eat and an acute lack of water, the Polish soldiers remained at their posts “ready for immediate action”.

In the morning the German assaults resumed with usual ferociousness. One German company even attempted a suicidal attack by climbing the steepest slope of the Mace, “Within a few minutes the company ceased to exist, and the shouts which were meant to buoy up their spirits in the assault, changed into horrible cries of men dying in the midst of burning grass.” Suddenly, something had changed. The German attacks became less co-ordinated than they had been on previous days. “Artillery fire grew weaker, mortars fell silent. It even stopped raining,” wrote

Marowski. Athena, the ancient goddess of war, had chosen her victor.

Around midday the crisis had passed. At last, the 4th Canadian Armoured Division came through from Trun – and with them came re-supplies of ammunition, fuel, food and medicine – as well as a route to begin evacuation of the wounded.

The last German attack from was fought off by both Polish and Canadian troops. At 2.00pm the battle was over.

The 1st Polish Armoured Division had defied waves upon waves of ferocious German attacks. Standing alone at the Mace, 1,500 Polish soldiers and 80 tanks, held on to their position in a heroic fight that proved a major feat of arms and critical to the success of closing the Falaise Gap on 21 August 1944.

The sappers of the Royal Canadian Engineers that came to relieve them put up a signpost at the summit of the Mace in their honour, which simply read ‘A Polish Battlefield’.

### **Fog of war**

Meanwhile, the 90th US Infantry Division had fought hard to hold Le Bourg-St-Leonard, the village was a key position, crucial for the final push to close the gap towards Chambois, and it changed hands several times during the fighting. By 18 August, the village was yet again under American control, and the 2/359th US Infantry fought its way to Chambois from the south. On 19 August elements of the Polish

battle group reached Chambois from the northwest, in the late afternoon and met up with American troops at around 7.00pm. With the Allies holding positions at St-Lambert, the Mace and Chambois – all German escape routes had been closed.

Nevertheless, in reality the German retreat was never fully stopped – the Allies lacked enough infantry to block all positions where enemies were escaping in large numbers. As General Maczek noted, it would be more accurate to describe the military engagement as “cutting through” rather than “cutting-off” the German escape route. There are no statistics for the number of Germans that managed to escape during the battle of Falaise. The German claim comes in high at over 40,000, the Allied estimate is 20,000.

According to Maczek, the reason for the high numbers of escapees was the tactical miscommunication at the highest levels of Allied command. In fact, the bulk of the 4th Canadian Armoured division had remained inactive during the critical phase of the battle. They did not join up with the Poles to close the escape routes west of the Mace, nor to help and re-open Polish supply lines to sustain them in combat.

In consequence, Lieutenant General Guy Simonds, commander of the II Canadian Corps, relieved Major General Kitching of his command of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division on 21 August.



*Thousands of Germans were killed, wounded or captured during the fierce fighting*



German deaths, estimated at over 10,000, are generally considered impossible to assess accurately due to the extent of destruction. The Polish Division took 5,113 prisoners, including General Otto von Elfeldt, and 137 officers, along with 55 tanks, 44 guns, 207 vehicles and 38 armoured vehicles.

As the guns fell silent over Falaise, a landscape of devastating carnage would emerge. Death and destruction paved the way as General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe, walked through the battlefield 48 hours after the closure of the gap, “I was conducted through it on foot, to encounter scenes that could be described only by Dante,” he wrote. “It was literally impossible to walk for hundreds of yards at a time, stepping on nothing but dead and decaying flesh.”

Between the 8 and 22 August the Polish Division lost 1,441 men, of whom 325 were killed, 1,002 wounded and 114 missing,

presumed dead. This represented about ten per cent of the division’s total strength, but in frontline units the casualty rate stood at 20 per cent and in some of the units, the losses were as high as 30 per cent. Overall, the casualties were comparatively higher than those of the Polish II Corps fighting at Monte Cassino.

### Endgame

Following a few days of rest after Falaise, the 1st Armoured Division resumed their pursuit of the German Army. Their motivation reflected in Maczek’s own words, “In this very moment, when Warsaw is bleeding, when we cannot be there to help in person, we can only unite with our fellow countrymen by fighting Germans, even though we are in a remote front.”

Covering almost 500km in a fortnight, whilst taking prisoners and equipment along the way, the division took Abbeville and Saint-Omer, followed by the Belgian towns of Ypres and Ghent. It joined the British in taking Antwerp,

and by mid-September the division stood before Breda, where Maczek launched a successful flanking manoeuvre – without civilian casualties, which also managed to prevent the historic capital from being destroyed.

To this day, General Maczek and the 1st Polish Armoured Division are remembered throughout the many cities they helped to liberate. Memorials are found in Normandy, Breda, Tiel, Stadskanaal, Krakow, Gdansk, Warsaw and recently also in Edinburgh.

In April 1945, in quite a wonderful twist of fate, General Maczek’s Division liberated Oberlangen (Stalag VI-C) POW Camp in Germany, where over 1,700 female prisoners of war, who had fought and survived the Warsaw Uprising, were being held.

Over the entire course of operations, from August 1944 to May 1945, the 1st Polish Armoured Division would take over 50,000 prisoners. They destroyed 260 tanks and self-propelled guns, 310 anti-tank guns and shot down 13 aircraft and nine V-1 flying bombs.

The total losses for the Polish Division were 304 officers and 5,000 other ranks. General Maczek’s famous words stand as a poignant reminder, “The Polish soldier fights for the freedom of other nations but dies only for Poland.” Born in 1892, General Stanislaw Maczek died in Edinburgh in 1994, at the age of 102. According to his last wish, he was laid to rest amongst his brothers-in-arms at the Polish military cemetery in Breda.

**“SOMETHING HAD CHANGED. THE GERMAN ATTACKS BECAME LESS COORDINATED THAN THEY HAD BEEN ON PREVIOUS DAYS. 'ARTILLERY FIRE GREW WEAKER, MORTARS FELL SILENT. IT EVEN STOPPED RAINING,' WROTE MAROWSKI. ATHENA, THE ANCIENT GODDESS OF WAR, HAD CHOSEN HER VICTOR”**





## Heroes of the Victoria Cross

# JOHN BISDEE

The 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen's Contingent in action against the Boers at Warmbad, Rooikop, Transvaal, South Africa, 1 September 1900

WORDS MURRAY DAHM

**W**hen the Second Boer War was declared on 11 October 1899, governments of colonies from around the British Empire offered to send troops to contribute to the British war effort. This included the governments of the six colonies of Australia (the country would not be confederated into a Commonwealth until 1 January 1901). Among the troops sent were the 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen Contingent, a unit whose members would be awarded two Victoria Crosses. Most of the troops the colonies of Australia contributed were mounted units, formed before departure. This was despite a decree requesting infantry contingents as being of most service and cavalry of the least.

Australians also enlisted in British units or South African colonial units and recruitment for British units, such as the Scottish Horse, was undertaken in Australia. The Australian contribution to the war effort took place over five waves, the first coming in 1899 immediately after the outbreak of the war and drawn from the men of the colonial militia. The second wave included the bushmen contingents (arriving between December 1899 and February 1900), recruited widely and paid for by public subscription or sponsored by wealthy individuals. The third wave of Australians were the Imperial Bushmen Contingents, recruited in a similar manner but paid for by the imperial government in London. After federation came draft contingents

raised by the state governments of the new Commonwealth and then, the new federal Commonwealth Government contributed Australian Commonwealth Horse troops. Some of these troops were still aboard their ships on their way to South Africa when peace was declared in May 1902. In all, about 16,000 Australian men served in South Africa. Trooper John Hutton Bisdee arrived in the third Australian wave with the 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen's Contingent in May 1900.

John Bisdee was born in the small Tasmanian community of Melton Mowbray in 1869, some 50 kilometres from the colony capital in Hobart. His grandfather had travelled to Van Diemen's Land in 1821 (its name was changed to Tasmania in 1856 to remove the stigma of the former penal colony). Educated in Hobart, John had then worked the family holdings at Hutton Park, Melton Mowbray, until he enlisted in April 1900.

Australians were valued in South Africa for their abilities to ride and shoot. In many ways, the terrain they were used to traversing in Australia matched that of the veldts of South Africa. The Australians were also resourceful and used to enduring the harsh and unforgiving environment of the Australian bush. All these things should have proved positives in South Africa. Despite their enthusiasm for the cause many Australians arrived in South Africa without much training. The colony militias only trained a few hours a month and their service did not require much of them. Similarly their officers had little training despite some efforts

to remedy this. Captain Charles Cox had led members of the New South Wales Lancers to Aldershot in England to undergo training in 1899. The disparity in the Australian outlook on life and British military training and leadership were evident in South Africa but would become more pronounced in during the First World War. During the Second Boer War, this fatal disparity became horrifically symbolised by the fate of Troopers Harry 'The Breaker' Morant and Peter Handcock, court-martialled and executed in February 1902.

The war in South Africa came as no surprise to Britain or the Empire. Tensions had been building between the Boers and Britain since the Napoleonic Wars. The two Boer republics, the South African (or Transvaal) Republic and the Orange Free State, formed in the 1850s, were recognised by Britain but tensions continued to grow. This led to the First Boer War in 1880-1881. Gold was discovered in the Transvaal in 1886 and many foreigners (especially British) flocked to the gold fields. Britain wanted to incorporate the Transvaal and the Orange Free State into a federation under British control and agitated for the rights of British citizens within Transvaal as well as control of the gold fields. Negotiations broke down in June 1899 and a series of ultimatums led to war being declared on Britain by the Transvaal Republic and the Orange Free State.

As early as July 1899, the Australian colony of Queensland offered to send troops and forces were requested from New South Wales and Victoria that same month. The first of



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WHEN THE ENEMY IN  
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FIRE AT SHORT RANGE  
FROM HIDDEN COVER,  
WOUNDING SIX OUT OF  
THE PARTY OF EIGHT”

*A Portrait of Colonel John Bisdee  
taken during the First World War*

*Right: Lieutenant Colonel  
Bisdee in Egypt in 1919  
as Assistant Provost  
Marshall, Australian  
Imperial Force*





HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS

these contingents arrived in South Africa in November 1899. As such, Australian troops were involved in the three phases of the war. The first phase, when British infantry were defeated and besieged by the more mobile Boer troops, took place between October and December 1899. The second phase, between December 1899 and September 1900, saw the British counter-offensive and most towns in South Africa coming under British control. The third phase, between September 1900 and May 1902, saw a largely guerrilla war waged between mounted Boer commandos and British mounted units. The first Australian units arrived too late, however, to be involved in the defeats of the ‘black week’ (10-17 December 1899) when more than 2,000 casualties were inflicted on the British by the Boers in three separate engagements. Australian troops were involved with the cavalry of Major-General John French at the relief of Kimberley and then at the battle of Paardeberg in February 1900.

Bisdee arrived with the 1st Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen’s Contingent on 28 May 1900 with 121 men and 133 horses, having set sail on 26 April. His unit was involved in the later phases of the British counter-offensive. Following the defeat at Paardeberg, the Boers relied more and more on guerrilla tactics performed by fast moving mounted irregular

“TROOPER BISDEE  
DISMOUNTED HIS HORSE AND  
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IN THE SADDLE, RUNNING  
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units. In response the British relied more and more on their own mounted units and especially those from Australia to whom the irregular nature of the war now seemed best suited. This was despite the incredibly harsh conditions for both horses and men. The Australians lost more men to disease than were killed by enemy action throughout the war. The units with Bisdee’s (the 4th South Australians and 4th Western Australians) formed the 4th Imperial

Bushmen under Lieutenant-Colonel Rowell. They proceeded to Port Elizabeth and from there were given the role of encircling the Boers in the Wittebergen Basin, a Boer mountain stronghold in the North-East Orange River Colony. A supply colony destined for Lindley and defended by the Tasmanians was attacked by General Piet De Wet’s forces but these were driven off. The Tasmanians were transported by train to Praetoria in August and then marched to join General Paget at Lindley. They subsequently saw hard fighting, one account stating that the men were under fire virtually every day. The Tasmanians joined the Mounted Brigade where they were usually employed as the advance guard, especially when enemy contact was expected.

On 1 September 1900, 20 men of the squadron under the command of 20-year-old Lieutenant Guy Wyllie. The lieutenant would also be awarded the VC for his actions that day. The Tasmanian Contingent were, as usual, in advance of the main force at Warmbad, near Rooikop, Transvaal. A group of eight men split off to pursue some 350 Boer cattle.

They entered a narrow gorge, rocky and thickly wooded, when a small force of Boers opened fire from cover and immediately wounded six of the eight Tasmanians, including Bisdee, Wyllie and the other officer. One trooper

Colonial Troops in South Africa, 1899-1901:  
Australian Bushmen on the March

Below: A group photo from  
Trooper Bisdee's welcome  
home to Tasmania after he  
was invalided home





(Brown) was wounded and later died, Corporal Brown was also wounded.

In his citation, Trooper Bisdee, incorrectly termed a private, "was one of an advance scouting party passing through a narrow gorge, when the enemy suddenly opened fire at close range and six out of the party of eight were wounded, including two officers. The horse of one of the wounded officers bolted and Trooper Bisdee dismounted, put the officer on his own horse and took him out of range of the very heavy fire". Wyllly's citation gives more details of the engagement, "That officer, seeing that one of his men was badly wounded in the leg, and that his horse was shot, went back to the man's assistance, made him take his [Lieutenant Wyllly's] horse, and opened fire from behind a rock to cover the retreat of the others, at the imminent risk of being cut off himself."

These were the first two of the 14 Tasmanians to be awarded the Victoria Cross and two of the six awarded to Australians during the Second Boer War. After successfully extracting themselves, the overall action was a success. Seven Boers were captured, 100 rifles, 40,000 rounds, two supply wagons and the 350 cattle.

During the action, Bisdee was wounded and, as a result, he was invalided home in December 1900. His arrival back in Tasmania

was something of a major event and he was welcomed by crowds at the train station. His, and Wyllly's, Victoria Crosses were gazetted in November 1900. Wyllly convalesced in Britain and was then commissioned in the South Lancashire Regiment in December 1900. Wyllly received his Victoria Cross from King Edward VII on 25 July 1901. Bisdee would receive his in Hobart in August 1902. Once recovered, however, Bisdee reenlisted, this time as a lieutenant in No. 1 Company, 2nd Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen Contingent and set sail for South Africa once more.

This saw Bisdee involved in the third, guerrilla, phase of the war, arriving with 253 men and officers and 289 horses on 24 April 1901. Bisdee continued to serve in South Africa until the end of the war. The Tasmanians joined General John French in the Cape Colony and were in regular contact with various enemy commandos. They then joined Major-General 'Harry' Scobell's column and were then formed into a Flying Column under Colonel Gorringe. They were "incessantly employed" for 12 months according to the official war record. Many of these operations began with long rides at night followed by an attack on a commando the following morning.

Another Australian mounted contingent's experience can be considered typical.

Between August and December 1901, the NSW Mounted Rifles rode 3,000 kilometres and were involved in 13 skirmishes. These resulted in five dead and 19 wounded with 27 Boer dead, 15 wounded and the capture of a further 196. The 2nd Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen Contingent suffered six deaths and 16 injured or otherwise struck off. Bisdee was Mentioned in Despatches during his service with this Contingent. On 22 May 1902 the Contingent embarked at Durban for Hobart, arriving home on 25 June.

John returned to Hutton Park although he was still a celebrity – he received his Victoria Cross from the governor of the state on 11 August, 1902, in honour of the coronation of King Edward VII which had taken place on 9 August.

Bisdee's wedding in Hobart in 1904 was a major state event. He then joined the 12th Australian Light Horse, Tasmanian Mounted Infantry and became the regiment's commanding officer in 1913. In July 1915 he joined the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) as a captain in the 12th Light Horse and departed for Egypt that November. He served in active operations until wounded in 1916 and was promoted, eventually reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and was assistant provost marshal in Egypt.

Bisdee was appointed OBE in June 1919. He died at home in Tasmania in 1930.

Portrait of the 2nd Tasmanian Imperial Bushmen taken in 1901 (the black armbands are in memory of Queen Victoria who died in January). Now lieutenant, Bisdee, stands in the back row, far right



These Boers on Spion Kop in January 1900 show both the terrain and enemy John Bisdee faced



Casualties on Spion Kop in January 1900. Improvements in weapons (many of which would remain in service until the Second World War) meant casualties quickly mounted in Boer War encounters



Illustration depicting an Australian contingent, on horseback, leaving Sydney for South Africa doing the Boer War campaign



# ANTONOV AN-2

WORDS STUART HADAWAY

The aeronautical dinosaur that still equips militaries and Special Forces worldwide

**T**he Antonov An-2 is the most produced Soviet post-war aircraft, beating even the prolific MIG-15. Over 18,000 have been built in around 40 variants since 1947, with the type in production into the early 2000s, giving it the record as the longest production run for any aircraft in history. It has been used by around 50 nations, mostly in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and the Far East, and widely built under licence. The Soviets affectionately called it the 'Annushka' ('Annie'), and NATO assigned the codename 'Colt'. It was made under licence in Poland into the late 1990s, and even more recently by the Chinese.

Initially designed for agricultural and forestry work by the Soviets, the aircraft is rugged, high capacity, and has extremely good low-speed and short take-off and landing characteristics. This has also made it ideal for military use, especially for the insertion of Special Forces. In 2017 the North Koreans released a photograph of at least four An-2s dropping parachutists in an exercise; such a flight of aircraft would be able to evade South Korean radar simply by being too slow for the radar's computer algorithms to consider them a threat.

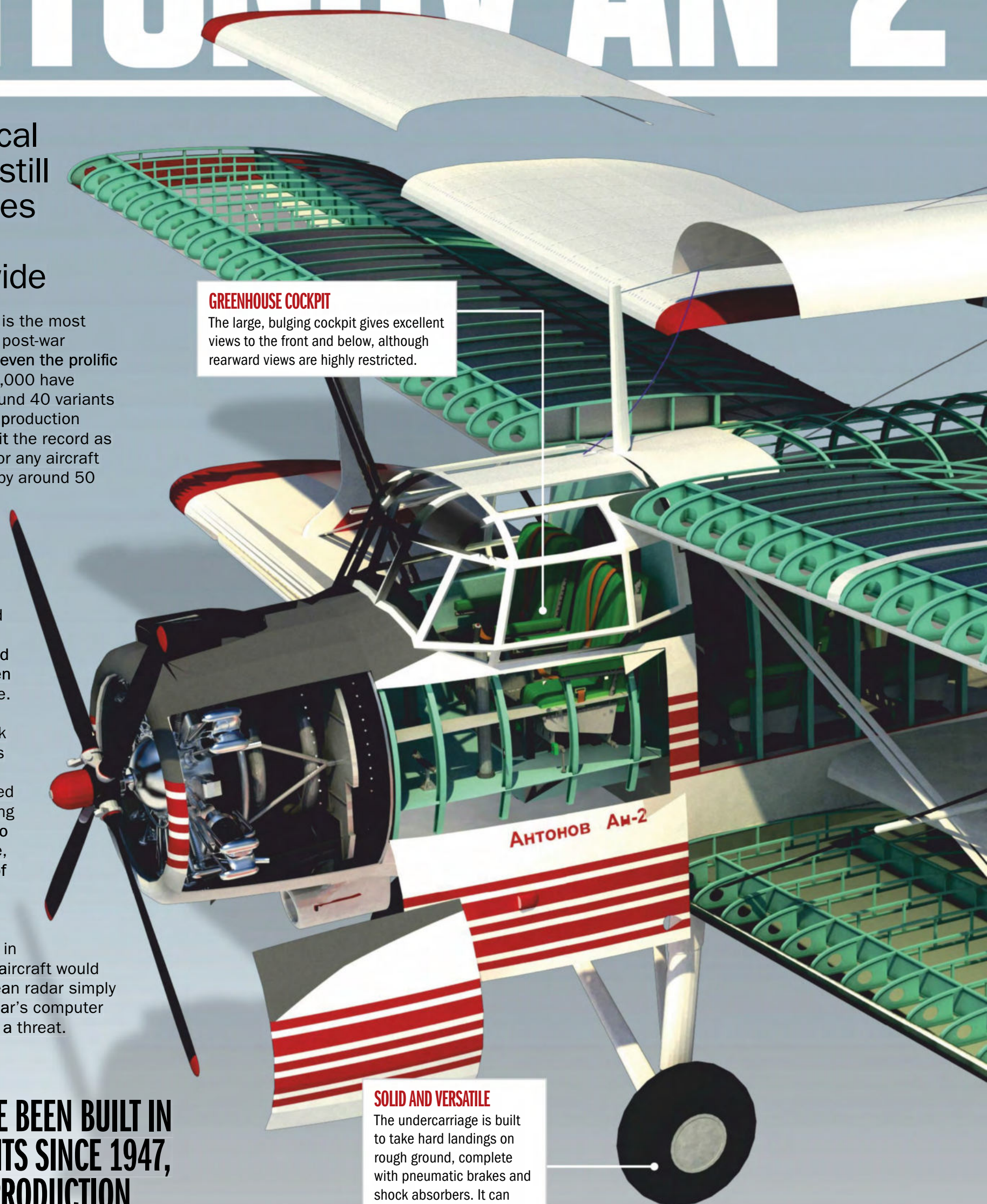
**"OVER 18,000 HAVE BEEN BUILT IN AROUND 40 VARIANTS SINCE 1947, WITH THE TYPE IN PRODUCTION INTO THE EARLY 2000S"**

## GREENHOUSE COCKPIT

The large, bulging cockpit gives excellent views to the front and below, although rearward views are highly restricted.

## SOLID AND VERSATILE

The undercarriage is built to take hard landings on rough ground, complete with pneumatic brakes and shock absorbers. It can also be modified for snow skis and water floats.





# ANNUSHKA

<b>ANTONOV AN-2</b>	
COMMISSIONED:	1947
ORIGIN:	SOVIET UNION
LENGTH:	12.4M (40FT 8IN)
WINGSPAN:	18.2M (59FT 8IN)
RANGE:	845KM (525ML)
ENGINE:	1 X SHVETSOV ASH-62IR 750KW (1,000HP) RADIAL ENGINE
CREW:	1-2
PRIMARY WEAPON:	NONE

**MAIN CABIN**  
The removable cabin door is at the rear of the passenger compartment, which runs forwards to keep the cargo on the centre of gravity.

**MAIN FUEL TANKS**  
Six fuel tanks spaced along the upper wings hold a fuel supply of around 1,200 litres (260 Imp gal).

**LEADING EDGE SLATS**  
At 64kph/40mph, slats in the leading edge of the wings will snap out, increasing wing surface and allowing the aircraft to 'parachute' to a soft landing. In anything near level flight, it is impossible to stall the An-2.



An Estonian Air Force An-2

Illustration: Alex Pang





The An-2's true main weapon is the troops it can carry. This Soviet model has the doors removed to allow paratroopers to jump easily



An An-2 equipped with an underwing 12-shot 57mm rocket launcher

ARMAMENT

Although various plans and prototypes were prepared for armed An-2s, generally with rear-facing guns for self-defence in reconnaissance and artillery-spotting variants, no armament was fitted as standard. However, several militaries have

improvised weapons-fits for their aircraft. In the 1960s at least a few aircraft of the Vietnam People's Air Force were equipped with underwing 12-shot 57mm rocket launchers for ground attack, and carried converted 250mm mortar rounds as bombs. Various small arms have also been recorded as being carried for use by the crews.

**“A FEW AIRCRAFT OF THE VIETNAM PEOPLE’S AIR FORCE WERE EQUIPPED WITH UNDERWING 12-SHOT 57MM ROCKET LAUNCHERS FOR GROUND ATTACK”**



A line-up of Polish Air Force An-2s at Krakow





The rear cabin can fit 12 passengers seated, or potentially more troops in less comfort

## DESIGN

The Annushka is a single-bay strut- and wire-braced sesquiplane of all metal construction. The skin is duralumin stressed metal and fabric, and the fuselage is semi-monocoque. Built for use in remote and basic fields, it is rugged and easy to maintain. The rear fuselage has a 12 cubic metre (424 cu ft) interior, able to hold 12 passengers on seats or six stretchers on racks. The cargo door is on the port side and incorporates a smaller passenger door, both of which can be removed for parachute operations.

**Right:** A Chinese built An-2, showing the wing structure





# ENGINE

The Shvetsov ASh-62 is a nine-cylinder air-cooled radial piston engine, rated at 746kW (1,000hp). Based on the Wright R-1820 Cyclone built under licence by the Soviets, the basic design was improved with a two-stage super-charger and other smaller modifications. The engine provides a top speed of 258kmh (160mph), and gives the An-2 a take-off run of 170m (560ft) and a minimum powered landing run of 215m (705ft). In a headwind of around 60kmh/40mph or more, the aircraft can effectively hover.

The Shvetsov ASh-62

Below: The bulging cockpit canopy allows for excellent downward visibility

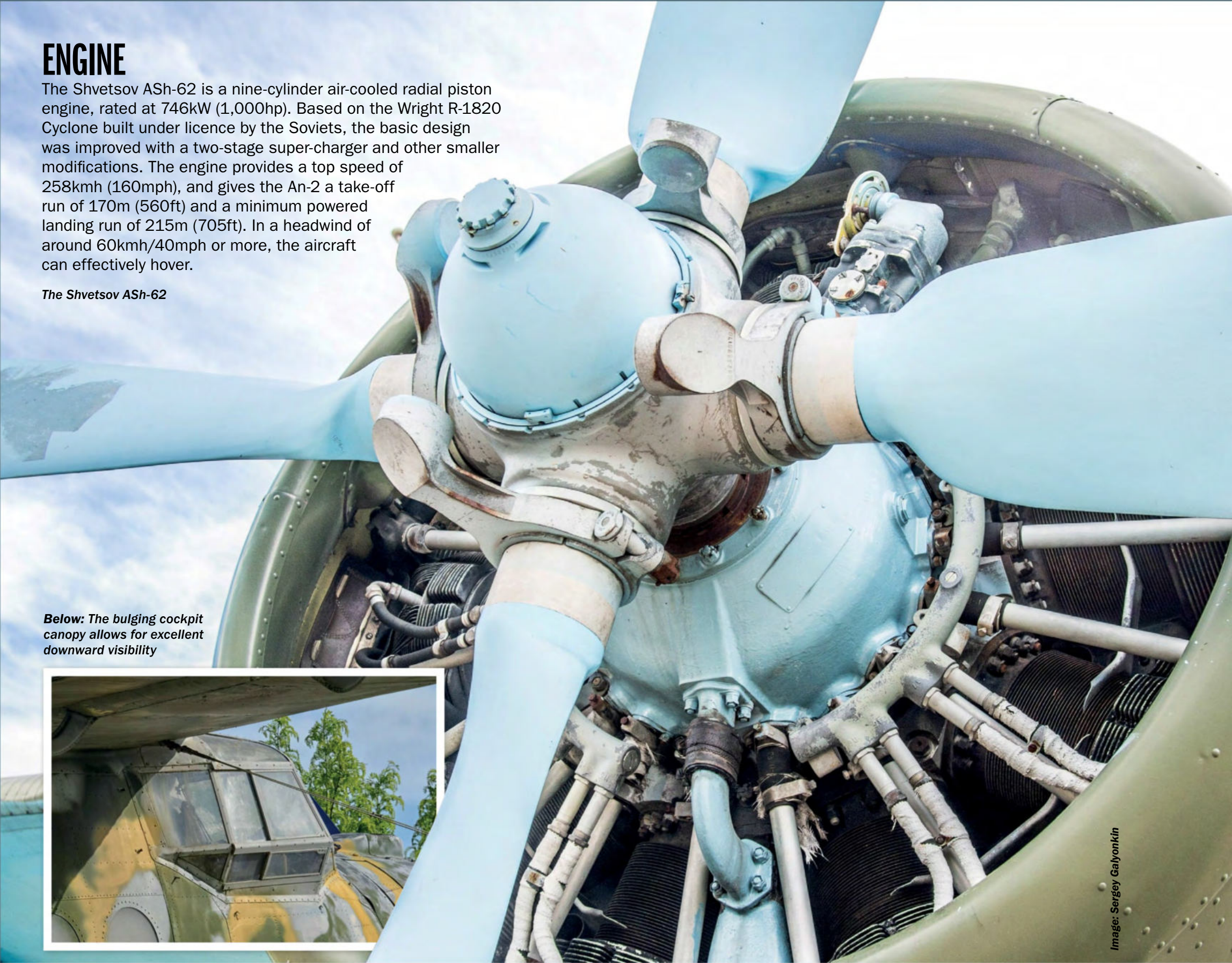
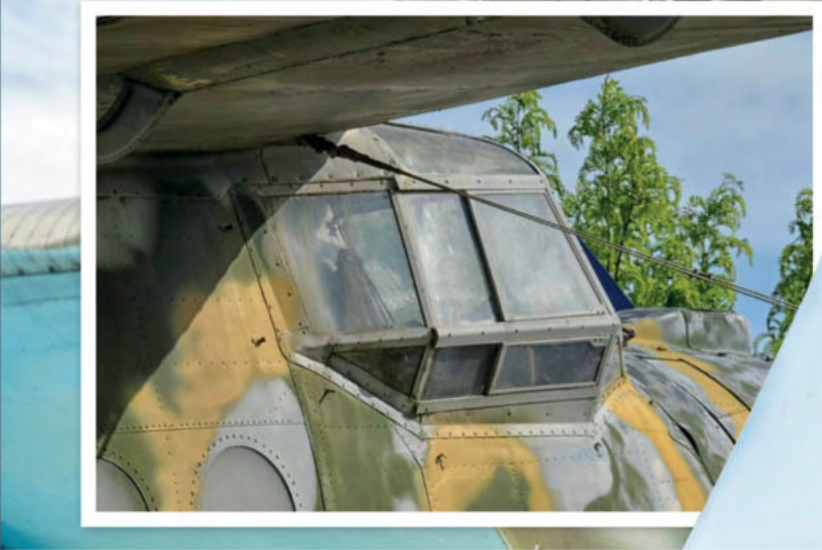


Image: Sergey Galyonkin

# COCKPIT

The An-2's cockpit is a spacious sealed unit, with heating and ventilation for crew comfort. The standard crew is two pilots side-by-side with dual controls. However, the aircraft can be flown by one pilot, and if need be a third crew member (generally as a flight engineer) can also fit into the cabin. The windows are large and give a good forward view, while they also bulge out to the sides, giving an excellent downward view as well.



The dual-seat cockpit of the An-2





A Russian An-2 in Soviet military markings

## SERVICE HISTORY

The Annushka may have started as an aircraft to support agriculture and forestry in remote regions, but it has also proven highly effective in certain military uses. The Soviets used the type for reconnaissance and artillery spotting, as have numerous other militaries. It first saw combat during the Korean War (1950-53), flying with the North Koreans. During the Vietnam War (1955-75) it was operated by the North Vietnam People's Air Force, with several being shot down in

action. At least one was shot down by F-4 Phantoms, and another by an Air America (CIA) Huey helicopter – the first ever confirmed 'air-to-air' kill by a helicopter. During that same incident (bombing a US covert radar station in Laos) another An-2 was lost to ground fire.

More recently, the An-2 stayed in service with several former Soviet countries. An Annushka of the Croatian Air Force was shot down during the Croatian War of Independence in 1991, by a surface-to-air-missile. The type continues in service in North Korea and possibly other covert units worldwide.

**“AT LEAST ONE WAS SHOT DOWN BY F-4 PHANTOMS, AND ANOTHER BY AN AIR AMERICA (CIA) HUEY HELICOPTER – THE FIRST EVER CONFIRMED ‘AIR-TO-AIR’ KILL BY A HELICOPTER”**

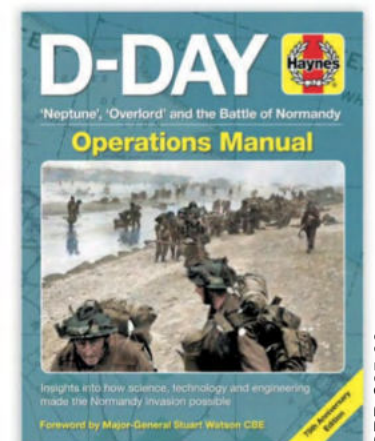


A Polish Air Force An-2

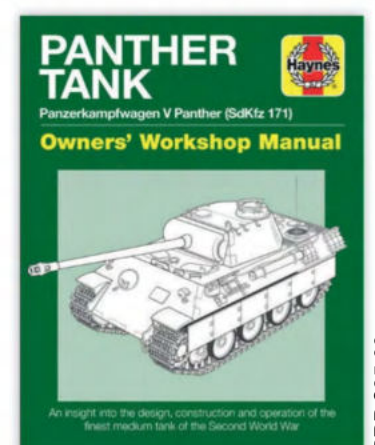
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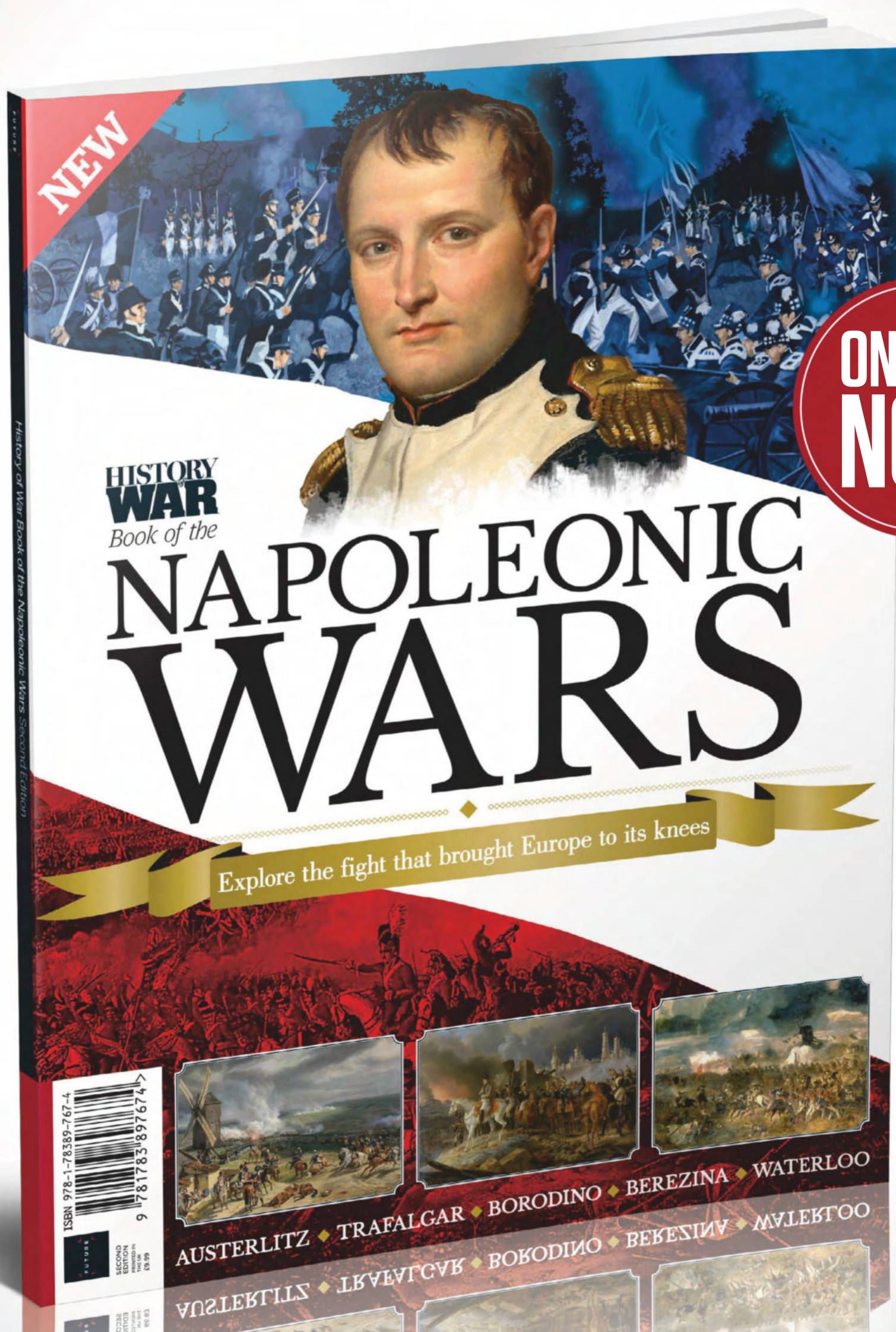
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ANTONY BEEVOR DISCUSSES HIS NEW BOOK AHEAD OF APPEARING AT THE INAUGURAL CHELSEA HISTORY FESTIVAL



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# DEFENDING THE FALKLANDS

## PART II

# THE MARINES PREPARE

In this second of a three-part series, the British Marines respond to threats against South Georgia and receive disturbing reports from home

WORDS MICHAEL JONES

**E**arly on the evening of Monday 29 March 1982 the new Naval Party 8901 (the Royal Marine Falklands garrison) sailed through the Narrows and into Stanley Harbour. Ahead was Stanley itself, the Falklands' capital, with its brightly coloured houses clustered around the harbour jetty. For the Marines it formed a picture-postcard scene. The tiny settlement of just over a thousand inhabitants occupied an area about half a mile long. "The streets were clean and tidy," remembered Corporal Jim Fairfield. "And it was the sense of silence that struck me the most. There were no car horns, no sirens – just a near total silence." That silence was about to be rudely shattered.

### Arrival

Marine Gary Williams was one of the new detachment. "As we approached Stanley the weather was fine," Williams recalled. "There was a crowd of people waiting for us to dock at the government jetty, at the rear of the

town hall. Then we were taken off to Moody Brook [the Royal Marines Barracks] where we were allocated our rooms and started to settle in." Detachment Quartermaster Sergeant Bill Aspinall added, "NP 8901 landed in conditions of total calm. We still had no real evidence that an invasion was imminent. Subsequently I phoned my wife, back in the United Kingdom, who was worried by the reports on the Falklands in the national press. 'There are no problems here,' I reassured her – and I meant it."

But later that evening, as the new Naval Party's commander, Major Mike Norman, sat chatting with his predecessor, Major Gary Noott, a rather different picture began to emerge. After an exchange of pleasantries and talk about the hand-over of command, the two men turned to the situation between Britain and Argentina. Mike Norman gave a recap of the final briefing he received from the Foreign Office, Argentina would be unlikely to take any military action and would instead ramp up the

economic pressure. "Yes, I was told much the same thing," Gary Noott replied. "They said there might be a lot of shouting on the diplomatic front – but not much else." And then he opened up about his real concerns.

Just over three weeks earlier, on 7 March 1982, an Argentinian Hercules transport aircraft had made an unauthorised landing at Stanley's Airport. The Argentinians claimed that it was an in-flight emergency involving a fuel leak, but no evidence of this was found when the plane was inspected. Noott was blunt, "The aircraft arrived without any formal warning, the control tower was not manned, because it was a Sunday, and if it was not for a local radio operator, who picked up on the plane's approach, it could have landed before anyone got out to the airport. As it was, there was just enough time for some armed Marines to drive out there first."

He leaned over towards Norman and added, "Mike, we saw that the Argentinians on board were wearing personal weapons in shoulder holsters. I brought up our entire force as





reinforcement and put snipers all around the runway. The Hercules eventually took off again but over-flight by the Argentine military are now a frequent topic of conversation, the incident has given everybody the jitters.”

In turn Mike Norman spoke about the John Biscoe being ‘buzzed’ by another Argentine Hercules on their voyage to Stanley. He felt a sense of unease. And Noott’s section was now understrength because of a problem on one of the Falklands’ dependencies, South Georgia – some 800 miles to the southeast.

### South Georgia

South Georgia was an extraordinary place. Huge glaciers, ice caps and snow-fields covered about three quarters of its surface in the austral summer (November to January); in winter (July to September) a snow blanket reached right down to the sea. The British Antarctic Survey maintained a small presence at an abandoned whaling station, Grytviken, and close by was the last resting place of Sir Ernest Shackleton. The beaches were host to a multitude of seals and sea lions. But growing political tensions were about to intrude on this remarkable environment.

On 11 March 1982 the Foreign Office approved a request by Argentine workers led by Constantine Davidoff to remove scrap metal from another of South Georgia’s disused whaling stations, at Leith – disregarding the strong concerns of the Falklands Governor, Rex Hunt, who felt Davidoff was untrustworthy. Hunt’s fears were justified. On 19 March Davidoff landed at Leith and immediately ran up the Argentine flag.

The following day HMS Endurance (the Falklands gunship, which under the Defence Review cuts was to be decommissioned at the end of its tour of service in April) was sent from Stanley to sort things out. It carried its full complement of 13 Marines and nine more men from Gary Noott’s detachment.

The original orders were to remove Davidoff’s party by force. Then the Foreign Office changed its mind. The Argentines were now only to be put ‘under observation’. On 29 March Endurance, with its two Wasp helicopters, Oerlikon guns, radio signalling equipment and 22 Royal Marines was still at South Georgia. Neither Gary Noott nor Mike Norman had any idea how long it would be staying there.

There was clearly something wrong, but the next day, Tuesday 30 March, was strangely quiet. That morning Norman and Noott went to visit the Governor, Rex Hunt. An official photographer captured the scene. As Hunt later wrote, “It was a happy, carefree occasion, with Gary in distinctly end-of-tour mood and Mike looking forward to a year of outdoor activity.” His command would begin on 1 April.

The commander of Naval Party 8901 was expected to play a full part in the genteel social life of Stanley. A round of social engagements was being drawn up for Major Norman, with a drinks or dinner party every evening of the week. “That day, it was still hard to grasp the reality of military action,” Mike Norman recalled.

However, in Britain, Whitehall was already picking up intelligence about a likely Argentine invasion. On 29 March, the day that the new

Naval Party 8901 arrived on the Falklands, the Secretary of State for Defence, John Nott, in consultation with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington, decided to dispatch a nuclear-powered submarine (HMS Spartan). It would arrive in the vicinity of the Falkland Islands on 13 April. On the same day measures were taken to reinforce the garrison at Stanley. It was agreed that it “should now be maintained at twice its existing strength”, and that Major Noott’s section would serve for an additional two months. However, this vital information was not passed on to the Falklands.

### The communications failure

The Falkland Islands were being instructed by two different government departments (the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign Office), departments which held differing views and had fallen out over the role of Endurance (the Foreign Office argued strongly for its retention). Rex Hunt was copied in to some telegrams but not others – often because one department assumed the other had done it. There was a lack of overall direction. And the transmission system left much to be desired. Atmospheric conditions could disrupt communications or in some instances cut them off altogether.

At 10.15pm GMT (6.15pm Falklands Time) on Wednesday 31 March Lord Carrington sent a crucial telegram to Governor Rex Hunt, “For your information and that of the commander of the Royal Marines detachment only. You should know that we are concerned about Argentine preparations for the assembling of a seaborne force which could be used to invade

**“THERE WERE NO CAR HORNS, NO SIRENS – JUST A NEAR TOTAL SILENCE. THAT SILENCE WAS ABOUT TO BE RUDELY SHATTERED”**

*A Royal Marine mans a GPMG SF position at dawn during the Falklands Conflict in 1982*





British soldiers  
surrender to  
Argentine troops  
that invaded the  
islands on 2 April  
1982 in Port Stanley

the Falklands. Current evidence suggests that this could occur in the next two or three days ... It seems prudent to review our current contingency plans ... We shall, of course, keep you closely in touch with developments.”

This vital communication never reached Stanley. Rex Hunt recalled, “In blissful ignorance of what was about to befall us, we hosted a dinner party.”

Defence plans

At 9.00am on 1 April, Falklands Time, Major Mike Norman took command of Naval Party 8901. He had at his disposal a force of 69 Marines and ten Naval Hydrographers.

It was a fine, clear day. Norman wanted to get a sense of the terrain, and went with Noott to look at beaches that might be used in the event of an Argentine landing. On 31 March a garbled message had come through about an Argentine submarine carrying out overt reconnaissance. He then went to the lighthouse on Cape Pembroke, where a section of Marines had been put on observation duty. At 2.25pm an urgent message came through from Rex Hunt. When he got back to Government House in Stanley, just over half an hour later, Norman was shown the telegram from Whitehall stating that an Argentine invasion was expected the following morning. It closed with the stark sentence, “You will wish to make your dispositions accordingly.”

Much could be said about that phrase. Before taking up the post, Mike Norman had been unable to find any national contingency plan to deal with an Argentine attack. An internal Foreign Office memorandum acknowledged that “there was confusion in the MOD about the role of the Royal Marines

“I HAD TO GIVE CONVINCING ORDERS TO MEN WHOM I KNEW HAD NO CHANCE OF WINNING AND WERE VERY LIKELY GOING TO DIE”

in the event of an invasion of the Falkland Islands”. The buck was then passed to the Marines’ commander, whom the FO hoped “would have a clear idea of his responsibilities”, without offering him any further guidance on what those responsibilities actually were.

Mike Norman was then left with the local plan, drawn up by his predecessor Gary Noott and signed off by Rex Hunt. This envisaged the Marines making an initial defence of the Falklands’ capital, and then retreating into the surrounding countryside, taking the governor with them. But Hunt suddenly changed his mind, countermanding what had already been put in place, and declaring that he intended to remain in Stanley. Further obstacles were thrown in Norman’s way. He found that he was unable to communicate directly with the local militia, the Falkland Islands Defence Force, or place it under his own command. Nor was he able to requisition explosives to destroy the airfield.

Everything was happening so quickly. Norman and Noott drove back to Moody Brook and gathered the Royal Marines. Everyone listened in shocked disbelief. A rolling system of defence was set out, in which the Marines would fight, section by section, from the likely landing beaches and airport back to

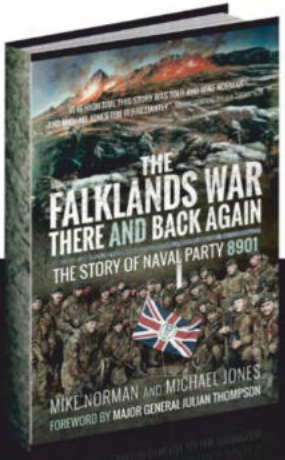
Government House. At best it would delay the assault and perhaps buy a little time for negotiations. But it would pit a small force of about 70 against two battalions of Argentinian troops (around 1,400 men), in armoured tracked amphibious vehicles (Amtracks), supported by a company of Special Forces, odds of something like 25:1 in favour of the Argentines. The Falklands garrison had been abandoned to its fate.

The final briefing

Before last light the Marines spent a couple of hours erecting makeshift defences. And then they all returned to Moody Brook for their final instructions. “It was the most difficult thing I have ever done in my life’, Mike Norman remembered. “I had to give convincing orders to men whom I knew had no chance of winning and were very likely going to die.”

Corporal Nick Williams said, “I will never forget the expressions on the faces of those around me. The enormity of it all was sinking in – it was a death sentence.”

Norman concluded, “We are going to be totally outnumbered – and tomorrow you will be fighting for yourselves and each other.” Simple professional pride kicked in. At the end there was a moment of complete silence – and then everyone applauded. Someone struck up the Monty Python song *Always Look On The Bright Side Of Life* – and all the Royal Marines went on their way, carrying as much military equipment as they could. The defence of the Falklands was about to begin.



FURTHER READING

Mike Norman and Michael Jones, *The Falklands War – There and Back Again: the Story of Naval Party 8901* (Barnsley, 2019)

Image: Alamy, Getty

**NEXT MONTH...**  
THE BATTLE FOR GOVERNOR HOUSE BEGINS, AS THE BRITISH NAVAL PARTY FIND THEMSELVES FIGHTING AGAINST THE ODDS. ISSUE 74 IS ON SALE 31 OCTOBER



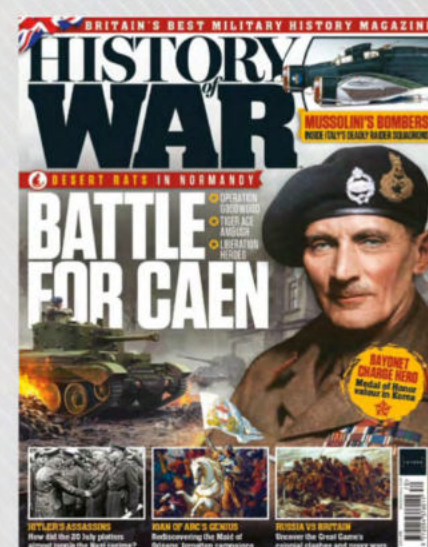
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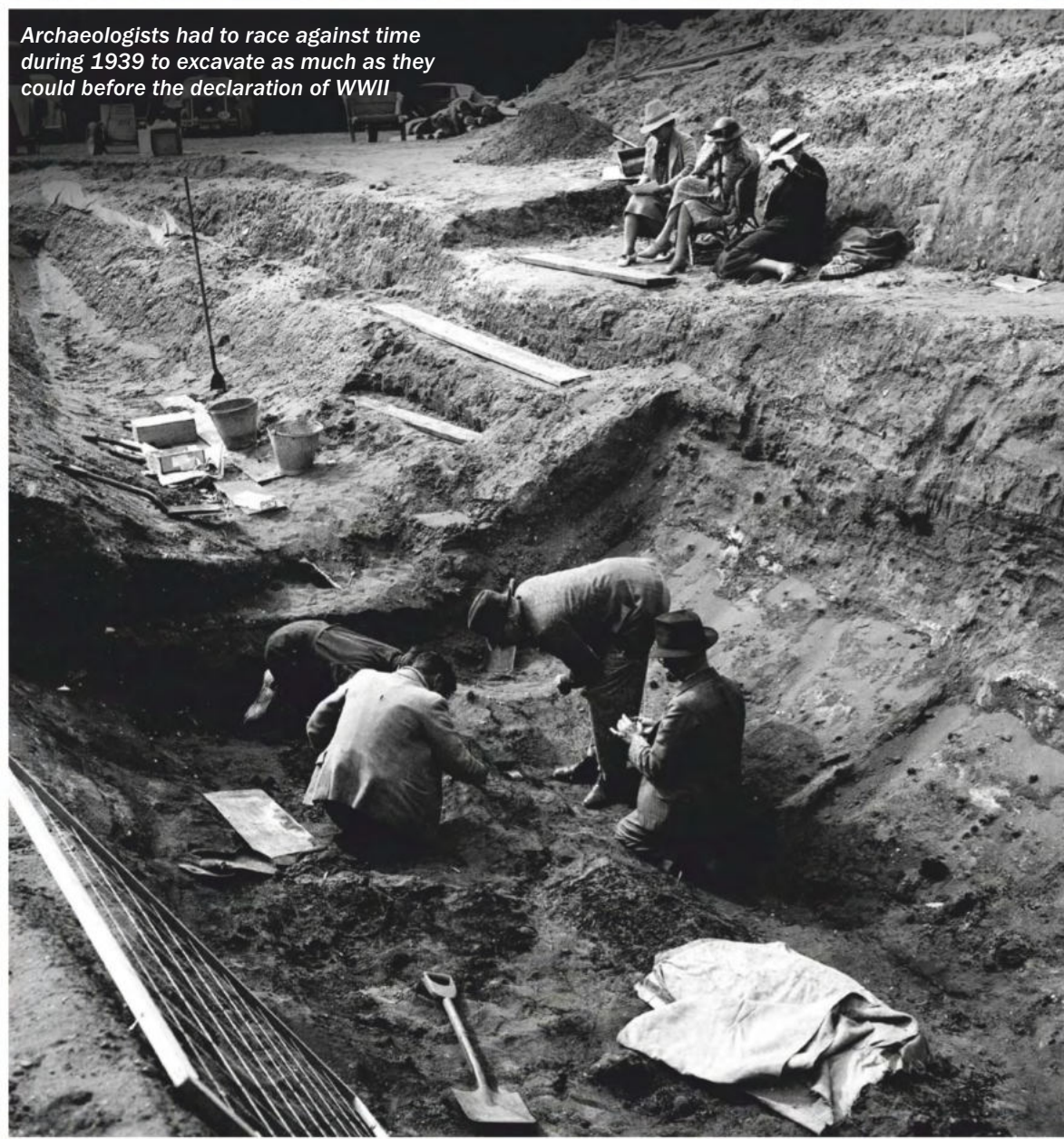
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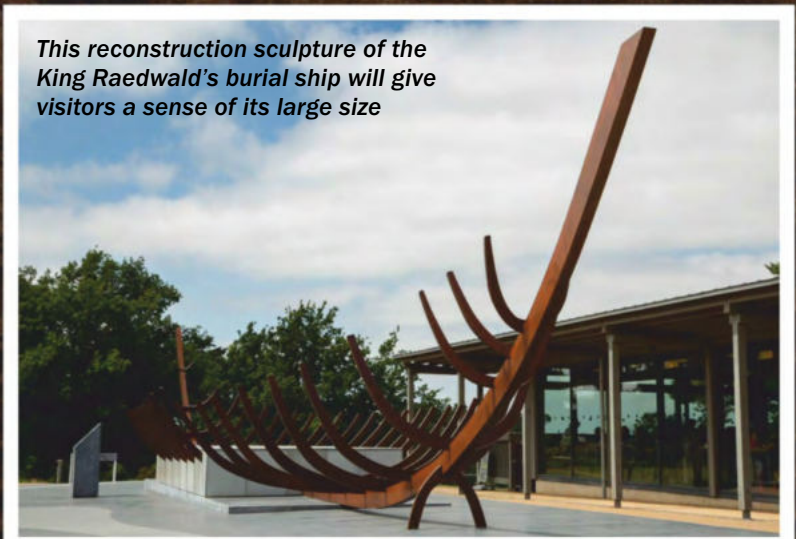
Discover Sutton Hoo's exciting new regeneration, Warwickshire's Civil War battlefield and Cardiff's connection with the 1944 liberation of Paris

Archaeologists had to race against time during 1939 to excavate as much as they could before the declaration of WWII



A large sculpture of the famous Sutton Hoo helmet will be displayed at the new reinterpretation project

This reconstruction sculpture of the King Raedwald's burial ship will give visitors a sense of its large size



## SUTTON HOO REGENERATED

**England's most famous Anglo-Saxon archaeological site has been given substantial funding for an ambitious reinterpretation project**

Sutton Hoo is one of the greatest archaeological discoveries in British history. In 1938, a local landowner called Edith Pretty called in archaeologist Basil Brown to investigate a series of mysterious mounds on her estate near Woodbridge, Suffolk. The subsequent excavation uncovered a 1,300 year-old ship burial of a man believed to be the 7th century Anglo-Saxon King Raedwald of East Anglia. Priceless treasures were uncovered that included his gold belt buckle, sword, shield, and – most famously – an iconic helmet.

These discoveries revolutionised historians' understanding of the 7th century and revealed a cultured and sophisticated period that was far removed from the Dark Ages. The extraordinary story is now being retold in a bold £4 million reinterpretation project at Sutton Hoo Visitor Centre, which is run by the National Trust. This includes a grant of £1.8 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to offer new installations, immersive experiences and routes through the local landscape.

Visitors will be greeted in the Courtyard with a full-size, 27-metre long sculpture representing the burial ship, while the Exhibition Hall and Edith Pretty's former home at Tranmer House will be completely transformed. There will also be a new route to reconnect the stories and people associated with the ship and the Royal Burial Ground.

Tranmer House will focus on the excavations of 1939 as Pretty and Brown's team raced to dig as much as they could before WWII broke out. The house will contain recorded interviews, vintage projections, documents and even the first ship's rivet that Brown unearthed. Meanwhile, the exhibition hall will showcase dramatic new replicas of treasures that are now housed in the British Museum. Original pieces from later digs will be displayed, including a 1991 excavation that uncovered a warrior and his horse alongside a sword, comb and bowls.

The hall will also offer a window on the Anglo-Saxon world through film, sound and displays to explore their culture, rituals and craftsmanship. The final part of the project in late Autumn 2019 will be the construction of a 17-foot high observation tower, which will offer bird's-eye views across the Royal Burial Ground and wider landscape.

Laura Howarth, archaeology and engagement manager at Sutton Hoo, explains, "The significance of the Anglo-Saxons at Sutton Hoo continues to resonate today through our language, law, culture and connections to the landscape. We wanted to create an experience which really does justice to this incredibly important heritage site and we hope our transformation will fire the imaginations of our visitors and help them feel a part of this story."

**FOR MORE INFORMATION: [WWW.NATIONALTRUST.ORG.UK/SUTTON-HOO](http://WWW.NATIONALTRUST.ORG.UK/SUTTON-HOO)**





A Sealed Knot commemorative re-enactment of the Battle of Edgehill



'The People's Struggle' contains artefacts from Edgehill as well as replica weapons, costumes and interactive displays



Left: St Peter's Church, Radway, also contains the effigy of Captain Henry Kingsmill, a Royalist officer who was killed during the battle

## EDGEHILL: THE PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE

Warwickshire is commemorating the 1642 battle in late October with a Sealed Knot re-enactment and a battlefield walk and talk courtesy of a local exhibition centre

As the first major engagement of the British Civil Wars, the Battle of Edgehill was historically important. Fought in Warwickshire on 23 October 1642 between Charles I and Parliamentary forces commanded by the earl of Essex, Edgehill ended in a stalemate. Although approximately 25,000 men fought in the engagement, its inconclusive result ensured years of unprecedented bloodshed throughout the British Isles.

Located in beautiful countryside, the battlefield is the largest in Britain as it was fought on the slopes of Edge Hill and the villages of Kineton and Radway. A permanent, free exhibition about the battle called 'The People's Struggle' can be found in St Peter's Church, Radway. Located in what was the centre of the battlefield, the exhibition contains artefacts, films, interactive displays and information boards.

In addition to the exhibition, the Sealed Knot historical association traditionally re-enacts the battle on the battlefield every year. This year's re-enactment will take place in Little Kineton over the weekend of 26-27 October 2019.

On 28 October 'The People's Struggle' will be hosting a battlefield walk led by Simon Marsh from Radway Church at 10.30am. Lunch will then be provided at the village hall before Marsh will give a talk on the battle inside the church at 2.30pm. The walk, lunch and talk cost £5 each although Battlefield Trust members go free for the walk.

FOR MORE: [WWW.BATTLEOFEDGEHILLEXHIBITIONRADWAY.ORG.UK](http://WWW.BATTLEOFEDGEHILLEXHIBITIONRADWAY.ORG.UK)

## REMEMBERING THE PARISIAN RESISTANCE

The Museum of the Liberation of Paris is home to a crucial part of French wartime history and is being co-curated by a professor from Cardiff University



Left: Beneath the museum at the Ledoux pavilions lies the former headquarters of the Paris Resistance



The liberation of Paris by Allied forces enabled General Charles de Gaulle to control the city as head of the Provisional Government of the French Republic

Paris was liberated from Nazi occupation 75 years ago and the people who fought for the city's freedom are now remembered in a major new museum. The revamped Museum of the Liberation of Paris is located in the 18th century Ledoux pavilions at Place Denfert-Rochereau above the former headquarters of the Parisian Resistance.

Focussing on key WWII heroes such as General Leclerc and Jean Moulin, the museum contains more than 300 objects, documents, photographs and archival videos from eyewitnesses. Visitors can also tour the key command post of the French Resistance located 100 steps beneath the building, which has been faithfully restored.

The historical advisor for the updated museum is Professor Hanna Diamond of Cardiff University. An expert on WWII, Diamond will be working with the museum's director Dr Sylvie Zaidman to co-curate the first exhibition from February 2020, which deals with the exodus and the impact of 1940 defeat of France on Paris.

Diamond says, "It has been a great privilege to work with the Museum of the Liberation of Paris on this important project. Visitors from the UK and further afield will gain a great deal from the stories that are told here, learning how the French Resistance acted to secure victory. It is fitting that the fascinating stories from this time are captured and preserved for future generations."

FOR MORE VISIT: [WWW.ORDREDELALIBERATION.FR](http://WWW.ORDREDELALIBERATION.FR)



WWII THIS MONTH...

# OCTOBER 1939

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War, every issue **History of War** will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place each month of the conflict

## HITLER MAKES HIS 'FINAL OFFER FOR PEACE'

On 6 October, recently returned from a conquered Warsaw, Adolf Hitler made an appeal of peace to Britain and France. In his speech at the Reichstag the Führer continued to justify the invasion of Poland as an act of defence, and declared his wish to seek peace in Europe. However he simultaneously declared his readiness and willing to fight on against the UK and France, stating, "Neither force of arms nor lapse of time will conquer Germany ... May those peoples and their leaders who are of the same mind now make their reply. And let those who consider war to be the better solution reject my outstretched hand." Secretly, plans were already being laid out for the campaign against France and the Low Countries the following year, known as Case Yellow.





## HMS ROYAL OAK IS FELLED

Just a week after Hitler's speech calling for peace, the Revenge-class battleship HMS Royal Oak was sunk by a U-boat while anchored at the British base at Scapa Flow. U-47, under the command of Kapitänleutnant Günther Prien, had easily infiltrated the British harbour under the cover of darkness on the night of 13/14 October. The first torpedo hit Royal Oak at just before 1.00am, catching the crew by surprise. 834 officers and men were lost in just minutes as the ship swiftly sank. Prien returned to Germany a hero and was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross First Class by Hitler.



## THE EXPEDITION ARRIVES

British troops wave as they arrive at a village on the French-Belgian border. The British Expeditionary Force would reach five regular and five territorial divisions, making up around 390,000 men.



## THE FATE OF WARSAW'S JEWS

After the capitulation of Polish forces in early October, the Nazis turned their attention to the country's Jewish population, many of whom were refugees who had fled from persecution in Germany. Although thousands of Jews had already travelled east as the threat of invasion grew, many who remained were arrested, placed in forced labour camps or executed.

Images: Alamy, Getty



# HISTORY WAR **REVIEWS**

Our pick of the latest military history books to hit the shelves

## ALARMSTART SOUTH AND FINAL DEFEAT

*THE GERMAN FIGHTER PILOT'S EXPERIENCE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN  
THEATRE 1941-44 AND NORMANDY, NORWAY AND GERMANY 1944-45*

HIGHLY ENGAGING ACCOUNT OF THE DRAMATIC AIR WAR OVER THE  
MEDITERRANEAN AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF GERMAN FIGHTER PILOTS

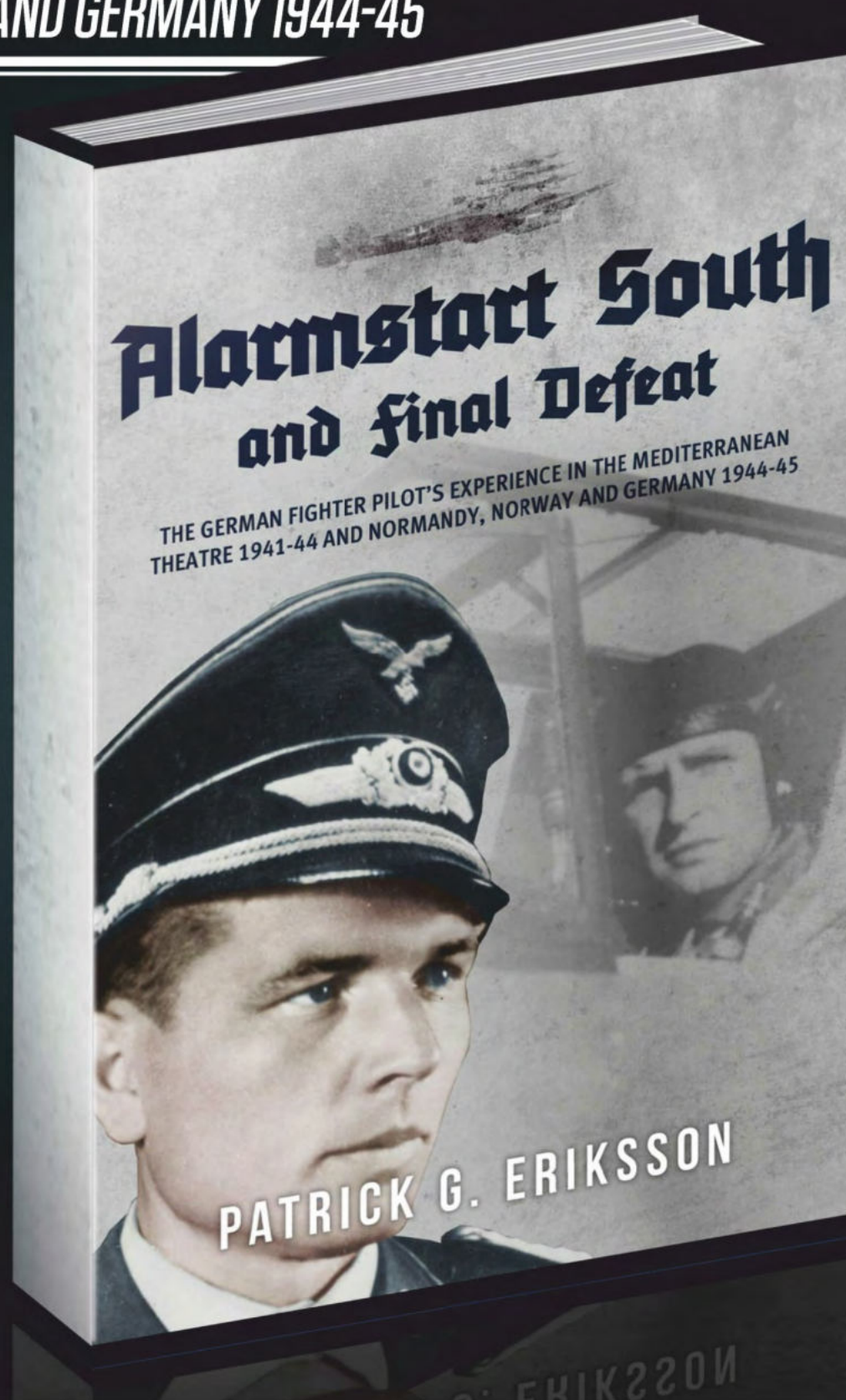
**Writer:** Patrick G. Eriksson **Publisher:** Amberley  
**Price:** £20 **Released:** 15 October 2019

*Alarmstart South And Final Defeat* is the final volume of Professor Patrick G. Eriksson's excellent *Alarmstart* trilogy. Volumes one and two examine the experiences of German fighter pilots in Northwestern Europe from 1939 to 1944 and on the Eastern Front from 1941 to 1945 respectively, while this volume considers their war over the Mediterranean in 1941 to 1944 as well as the final year of the war over Germany. Although the third book in the series, it works well as a standalone volume and there is no requirement for the reader to have read the previous two.

Since the end of the Second World War, there has been a plethora of books written by or about the experiences of Allied aircrew in every theatre of war. However, although there are examples of similar books by German pilots, there is relatively little from the Axis point of view. Eriksson's work, therefore, is a very welcome addition to the current literature.

Eriksson, who has thoroughly researched his subject, writes engagingly about the German fighter pilots' war. He makes his work come alive with copious amounts of eyewitness accounts, ranging from junior non-commissioned officers to colonels as well as other Luftwaffe personnel, many of whom he has personally interviewed. Eriksson sets these accounts within the campaigns that make up the focus of this volume, including the Balkans, North Africa, Sicily, Italy, Normandy and the final desperate clashes over Germany. Eriksson has greatly added to our understanding of the war in the air over Europe. **MS**

**"HE MAKES HIS WORK COME ALIVE WITH  
COPIOUS AMOUNTS OF EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS,  
RANGING FROM JUNIOR NON-COMMISSIONED  
OFFICERS TO COLONELS AS WELL AS OTHER  
LUFTWAFFE PERSONNEL"**





# THE TALIBAN AT WAR

AN INSIGHT INTO THE MILITARY FIELD OF ACTIVITY OF A HIGHLY COMPLEX ORGANISATIONAL MACHINE

**Author:** Antonio Giustozzi **Publisher:** Hurst & Co. **Price:** £50 **Released:** September 2019

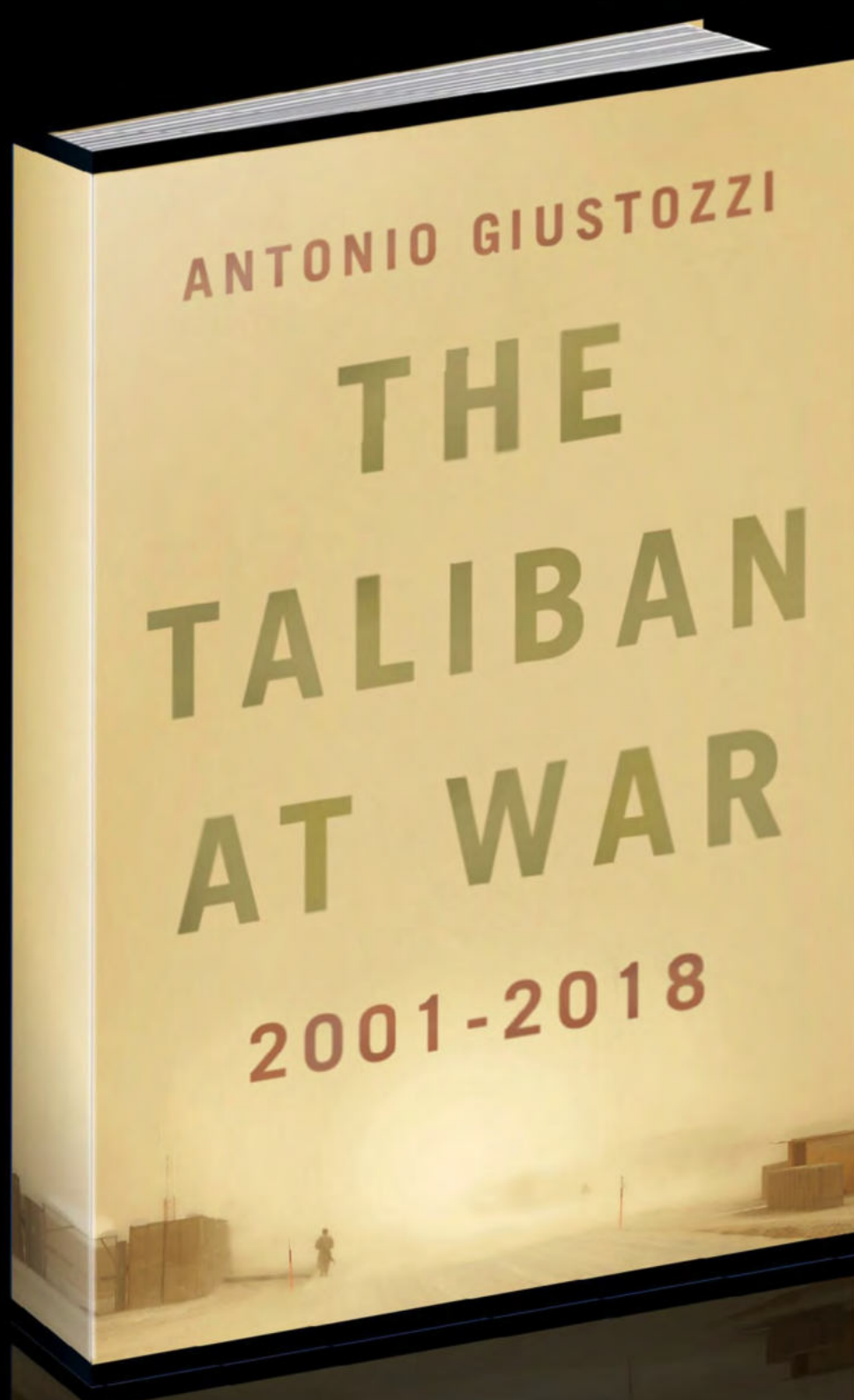
The Taliban swept across Afghanistan like a force of nature after it was established in 1996. Seven years later it was vanquished and dispersed with relatively little effort by a coalition of US and other NATO forces (ISAF). Few would have expected the Taliban to make a comeback in 2003 and mount a resilient challenge to a large-scale military commitment by the Western allies.

Antonio Giustozzi's book provides an in-depth analysis of how the Taliban wages war and how fighting a 16-year-long conflict has affected the movement. The author's point of departure is the collapse of the Taliban in 2001, its impact on the movement and

the early unsuccessful efforts to relaunch the insurgency. Five years later we find the Taliban enjoying its golden era, with the group in the ascendancy and full of confidence.

Years of warfare are to follow, when the book takes the reader through the Taliban's transformation into a highly-professionalised insurgency on the offensive, yet still lacking the maturity to seize power. Basing his narrative on extensive primary research and hundreds of interviews with Taliban militants, Giustozzi shows how the organisation grew more intractable with ISAF's impending departure. They became bogged down in internal strife and failed to grasp opportunities to seek a political settlement with Ashraf Ghani's elected administration in Kabul.

Giustozzi contends that the Taliban improved its image by confronting IS militants who were committing atrocities on Afghan soil. "By fighting IS and by appearing relatively moderate in comparison," he says, "the Taliban gained legitimacy internationally and internally." The stumbling block is the Trump administration's unpredictable and ambiguous policies on dealing with the Taliban, something that is not likely to change before the 2020 US presidential election. **JS**



**"ANTONIO GIUSTOZZI'S BOOK PROVIDES AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF HOW THE TALIBAN WAGES WAR AND HOW FIGHTING A 16-YEAR-LONG CONFLICT HAS AFFECTED THE MOVEMENT"**



Read more about the Taliban in Antonio Giustozzi's new book



Taliban border guard in Turkham, Afghanistan

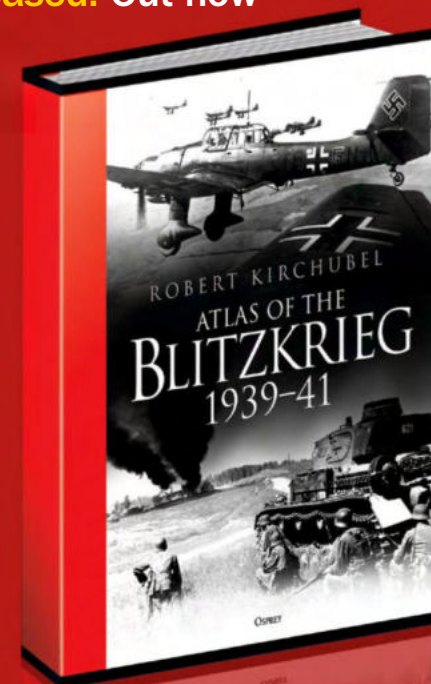
## ATLAS OF THE BLITZKRIEG 1939-41

**Author:** Robert Kirchubel **Publisher:** Osprey

**Price:** £45 (hardback) **Released:** Out now

From the opening shots of September 1939, to the Balkan campaign up until June 1941, each stage of Nazi Germany's lightning offensives is beautifully detailed in this new title from historian Robert Kirchubel.

With 98 highly detailed graphical maps, readers can follow the physical and strategic challenges faced by commanders on both sides. In the front of the tome, there is also a handy legend of unit symbols, for those less literate in military maps and abbreviations. Other titles in this series include *Atlas Of The Eastern Front 1941-45* and *Atlas Of The European Campaign 1944-45*.





# CALL SIGN CHAOS

A MEMOIR OF A FIGHTING SOLDIER, FROM MARINE CORPS RECRUIT TO FOUR-STAR GENERAL

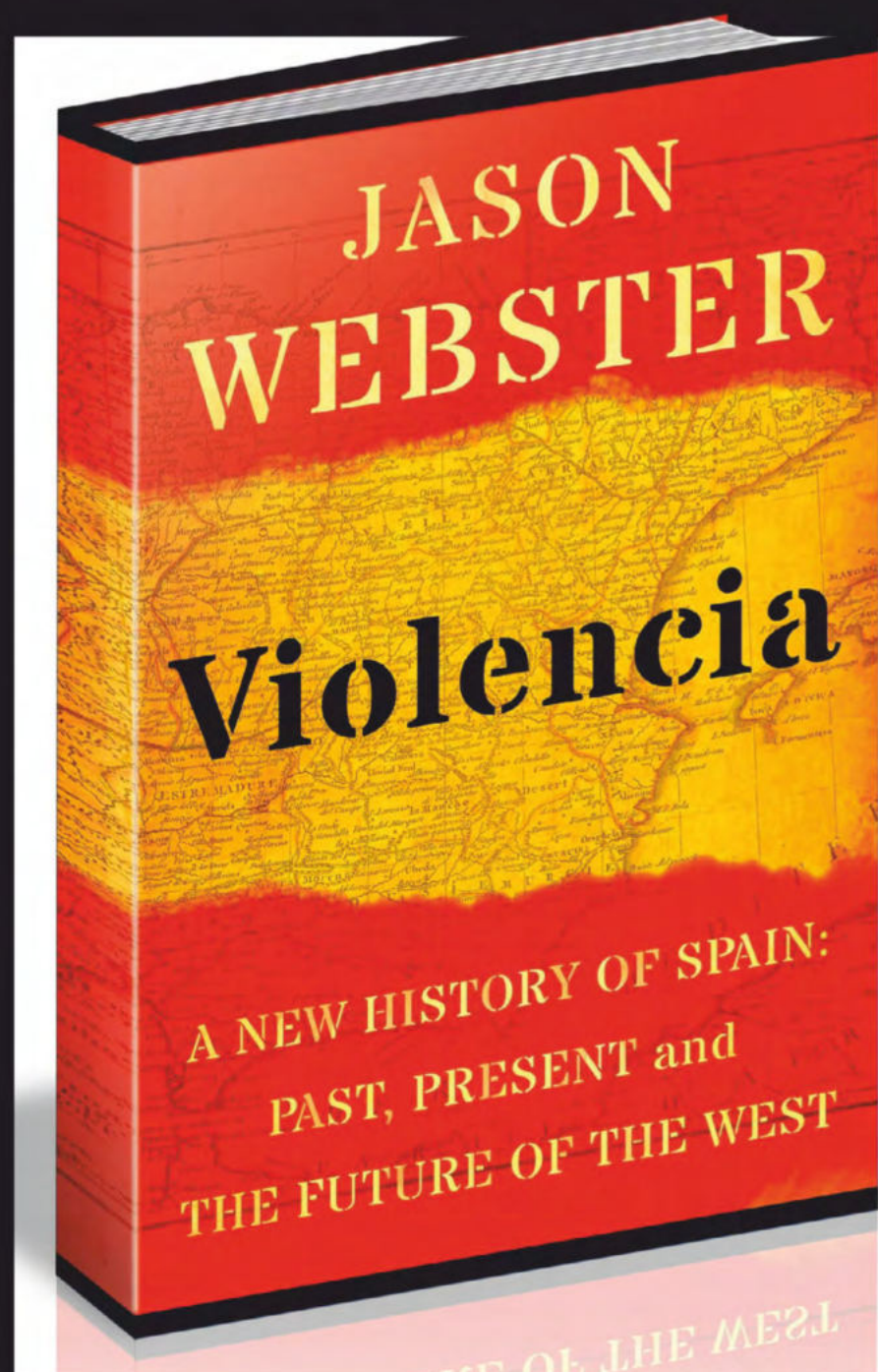
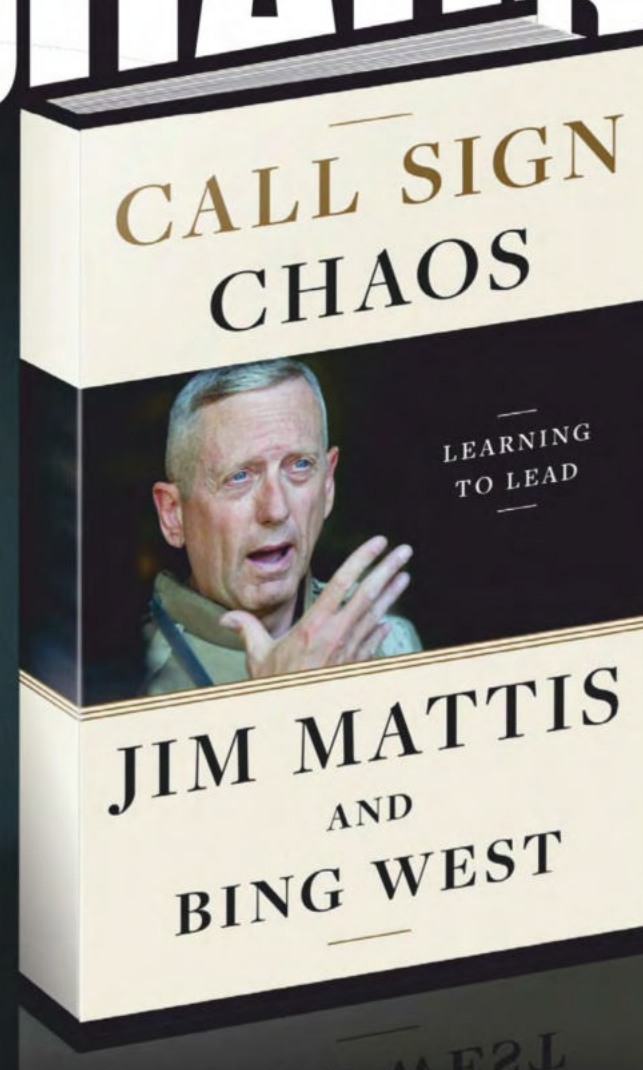
**Author:** Jim Mattis and Bing West **Publisher:** Random House **Price:** £17.99

In nine words, the dedication in Jim Mattis's book reflects the author's innermost beliefs, "To all those who serve in the defence of our values." Taking the story forward nearly half a century, from Mattis's enlistment in the Marines in 1972 to the end of his tenure as US Secretary of Defence in 2018, we encounter the same principles embodied in his letter of resignation to Donald Trump. The letter abounds with expressions like "showing respect to allies" and "the solidarity of our alliances". It ends with the diplomatic, "Because you [Trump] have the right to have a Secretary of Defence whose views are better aligned with yours on these and other subjects."

The book, with input from military historian Bing West, takes the reader through three aspects of soldiering that are key to Mattis's career: direct, executive and

strategic leadership. It is the career of a general who leads from the front, 'raised' by the Vietnam generation of Marines, where he first led troops into battle. The narrative moves on to his tours of executive leadership, when Mattis commanded forces of up to 40,000 troops and had to adapt his leadership style to ensure his intent and concerns were transmitted to soldiers he would seldom see. He rounds off the story by delving into the challenges and techniques at the strategic level, covering issues like civilian-military interaction and the challenge of reconciling war's grim realities with political leaders' aspirations.

Mattis's highly-readable book brings to light a personality shaped by the credo of the need for lethality and a winning spirit, combined with the enlightened values of cooperation and ideals to draw support from allies. **JS**



## VIOLENCIA

A SWEEPING AND CONTROVERSIAL HISTORY OF SPAIN, A COUNTRY STEEPED IN CONFLICT THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY

**Writer:** Jason Webster **Publisher:** Little, Brown **Price:** £20

*The Oxford History Of Modern India* describes the Afghans as "the Spaniards of Asia". A harsh judgement, perhaps, but not entirely off the mark in the context of a country that has suffered so much civil strife, which is the case of Spain. Jason Webster has produced what is destined to be a hotly-debated narrative of the land he knows so well.

"This isn't just about the dark side of Spain," the author says, "but there is no denying the fact that violence plays a huge role in Spanish history. You have only to consider the name of the country's patron saint, Santiago Matamoros, which translates as St James the Moor Slayer."

Conflict has characterised the history of Spain, more so than in other European countries. Every century has seen at least one major civil war. The book takes the reader through the country's multicultural saga, from Roman to Visigoth to Moorish occupation, each period marked by almost ceaseless warfare. The Muslim invasion of 711 was swift – the peninsula was overrun in about a decade and it required almost eight centuries of fighting to drive out the invaders. Webster's analysis of the 1936-39 Civil War highlights the reinvigoration of Basque and Catalan regional nationalism, two destabilising issues that continue to undermine Spain's fragile democracy.

For Webster, Spain remains a land of conflict. "The main dividers in Spanish society are politics and geography, meaning where you're from," he says. His outlook for the country's future is not fatally pessimistic. "If there is a glimmer for Spain to be gleaned from her history, it is with the darkness also comes the light." **JS**



# THE GUNPOWDER PLOT

## TERROR IN SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLAND

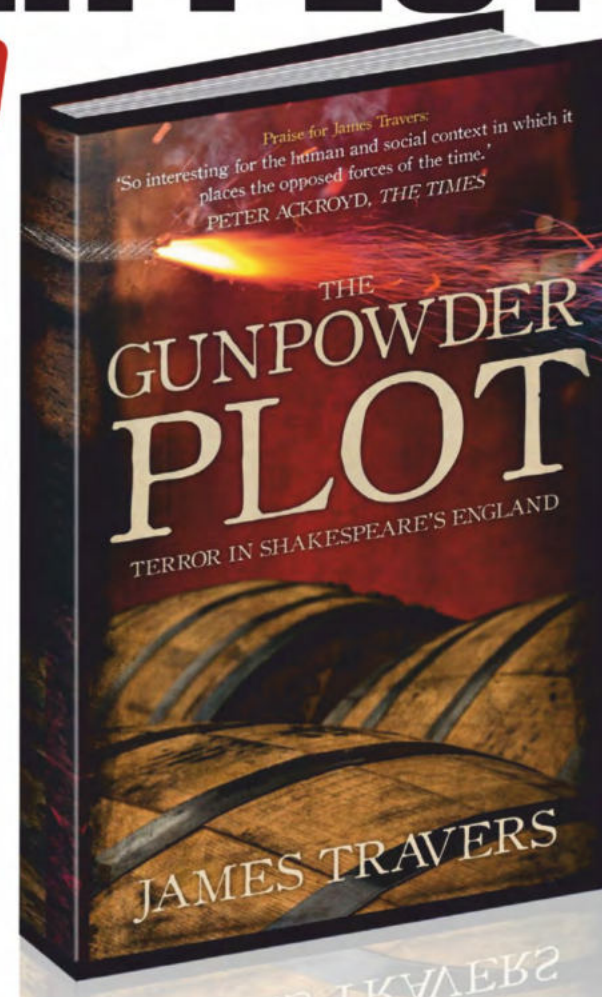
AN ENTHRALLING AND FRESH RE-EXAMINATION OF ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS AND DRAMATIC EVENTS IN BRITISH EARLY MODERN HISTORY

**Writer:** James Travers **Publisher:** Amberley **Price:** £20

The Gunpowder Plot of 1605, the failed assassination attempt of James I by a group of English Catholics led by Robert Catesby, is perhaps one of the most well-known events in modern British history. The plan had been to blow up the Houses of Parliament during the State Opening of Parliament on 5 November, after which the plotters hoped to install James's young daughter, Elizabeth Stuart, the so-called 'Winter Queen', as a Catholic head of state. The plot, of course, was thwarted and led to the rather grisly executions of some of those implicated, not to mention the long-standing tradition of Bonfire Night that is still enjoyed by many today.

However, what is interesting about the Gunpowder Plot is that it was particularly well-documented at the time, which has allowed subsequent generations of historians to closely examine events in ways perhaps not possible with other historically important events. Many of these documents are held at the National Archives in Kew, London, where author James Travers works as a cultural property manager. As such, he has been able to study these documents in incredible detail.

Travers has produced an intriguing re-examination of the Gunpowder Plot from these period sources, expertly weaving through the complex issues of the day and the motivations of those who sought to kill their king. He has taken a new look at the investigation made into the plot at the time as well as examined fresh evidence of the torture of Guy Fawkes, the 'unknown face' of the plot. **MS**



## WHY AMERICA LOSES WARS

Limited War and US Strategy  
from the Korean War  
to the Present

DONALD STOKER

"A work vital to regaining the competence  
necessary to win in war." H. R. McMaster

## WHY AMERICA LOSES WARS

THE UNITED STATES FINDS ITSELF INVOLVED IN ONGOING WARFARE BECAUSE THE COUNTRY'S LEADERS NO LONGER KNOW HOW TO THINK ABOUT WAR

**Author:** Donald Stoker **Publisher:** Cambridge University Press  
**Price:** £22 **Released:** Out Now

Leaving aside political bluster and ballyhoo, the unfortunate fact is that the US cannot claim meaningful victory in the armed conflicts it has waged since the end of the Second World War. Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq – none of these wars ended in America's favour. It might be argued that of the multiple conflicts, only the 1991 Gulf War could be considered a success. Not an impressive batting average for a country that boasts the world's most powerful military machine.

American military historian Donald Stoker explains in his book that since 1945, the United States' experience of war has been a frustrating one, full of stalemates, setbacks, and only occasional victories.

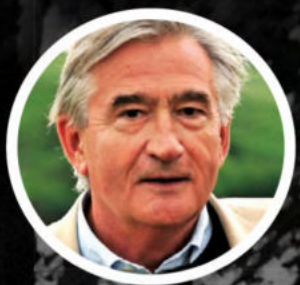
The author pins the blame for this dismal record on muddled thinking about 'limited war', particularly as it refers to standing armies confronting elusive insurgencies. Flawed ideas about fighting have undermined America's ability to understand, wage and win wars, and to secure post-conflict peace.

The failure to devise a successful strategy for dealing with the challenges of limited conflict and bringing them to a conclusion has critically weakened the country's approach to war. The bottom line, Stoker emphasises, is that victory matters. In war the costs of defeat are too high even when the survival of the state is at stake. "Your enemies draw lessons from defeat, often the wrong ones," he says. "Saddam Hussein and Osama Bin Laden looked at America's failure in Vietnam and concluded the US was feckless and weak and thus not a credible threat." Stoker believes that in wartime, leaders need to set proper political objectives and spend more time studying war termination. A successful outcome will be achieved by better thinking on what victory looks like. **JS**

**"FLAWED IDEAS ABOUT FIGHTING HAVE UNDERMINED AMERICA'S ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND, WAGE AND WIN WARS"**



# “ARNHEM WAS A VERY UNNECESSARY DEFEAT”



Ahead of his appearance at the inaugural Chelsea History Festival in October 2019, Sir Antony Beevor discusses his book about the “heroic failure” and severe consequences of Operation Market Garden

Sir Antony Beevor is the author of bestselling military history books such as *Stalingrad* and *Berlin: The Downfall 1945*



Images: John Fry, Getty

British paratroopers take cover in a shell hole at the Battle of Arnhem. Beevor says that despite the flawed planning of their superiors, the paratroopers fought with immense bravery



2019 marks the 75th anniversary of Operation Market Garden. This daring Allied airborne plan aimed to secure crossings across the River Rhine, advance into northern Germany and swiftly end the Second World War. In reality Market Garden was a costly failure that resulted in high casualties and delayed the Allied push into Germany for months. The operation was also a remarkable feat of arms due to the extreme courage of Allied troops, which was epitomised by the actions of British paratroopers at Arnhem.

One of the most recent histories about the events of September 1944 has been the *Sunday Times* number one bestseller *Arnhem: The Battle For The Bridges, 1944*. Written by renowned historian Sir Antony Beevor, *Arnhem* debunks the myths surrounding Market Garden by using overlooked sources from Dutch, British, American, Polish and German archives.

Sir Antony Beevor discusses the highly flawed plans for the operation, the bravery of soldiers and civilians alike, and the often neglected but huge suffering of the Dutch in the wake of the Allies' failure.

#### **What was the incentive behind writing *Arnhem*?**

The main reason was that I was always rather irritated by other books that never really probed into the disaster of the planning. The other problem was that the real suffering of the Dutch and the consequences of the failure of Operation Market Garden had not really been developed. I'm afraid that the histories of the past have always focussed purely on the military side.

As the great Professor Sir Michael Howard rightly emphasises it should be the “history of war”. This means that one should be a historian of war and not a military historian, which is a very different matter. You should look at the way civilians are affected just as much as soldiers on operations, as well as their success or failure.

#### **What is your analysis of the plan for Operation Market Garden?**

It was a very bad plan, right from the top and right from the start. Montgomery tried to impose his plan against the instructions of

*Frederick ‘Boy’ Browning commanded the British I Airborne Corps. During the operation he landed near Nijmegen in a glider with three teddy bears and a framed print of a Renaissance painting in his pack*

Eisenhower and his own War Office. In any airborne operation the British Army left the planning to the Royal Air Force or consulted them. Montgomery refused to do that and was convinced that the RAF was cowardly. He had no idea about airborne operations but he laid down the law. General ‘Boy’ Browning then told the American air force commanders the plan but they pointed out that it couldn't be done.

This was because the airborne distances were greater than the calculations Browning had made and that they couldn't stick two gliders behind each tug aircraft. The days were also shorter and, crucially, this meant that they couldn't have two lifts on the first day. All of the assumptions were completely turned upside down and Browning should have said to Montgomery, “We must re-think the whole thing.”

The other problem was that the aircraft, paratroopers and gliders landed on the wrong side of Arnhem, eight miles away from their target. This meant that the paratroopers lost all surprise, which is the one weapon that airborne troops need. If you don't have surprise and are too lightly armed you're going to get a very bloody mess. I'm afraid that's exactly what happened.

#### **What are your thoughts on Lieutenant Colonel John Frost's and 2 Para's stand at Arnhem Bridge?**

They were incredibly brave and fought extremely well. The Panzer Grenadiers were full of admiration and considering their numbers they outfought the Germans there.

But, of course, they were in a minority and didn't have any heavy weapons.

There is absolutely no criticism that can be held against them there and Frost's leadership was superb. The real problem lay with the planning and that is the answer to what went wrong. Arnhem was a very unnecessary defeat.

#### **How detrimental was the failure of Operation Market Garden for the Dutch?**

It was utterly disastrous. Not only did many of them, perhaps around 3,000, get killed in the fighting but also, because of their bravery in helping the Allies, the real horror came later when the Germans took their revenge.

Many of the stories in the book are about the bravery of the civilians and particularly the degree of suffering. The Dutch

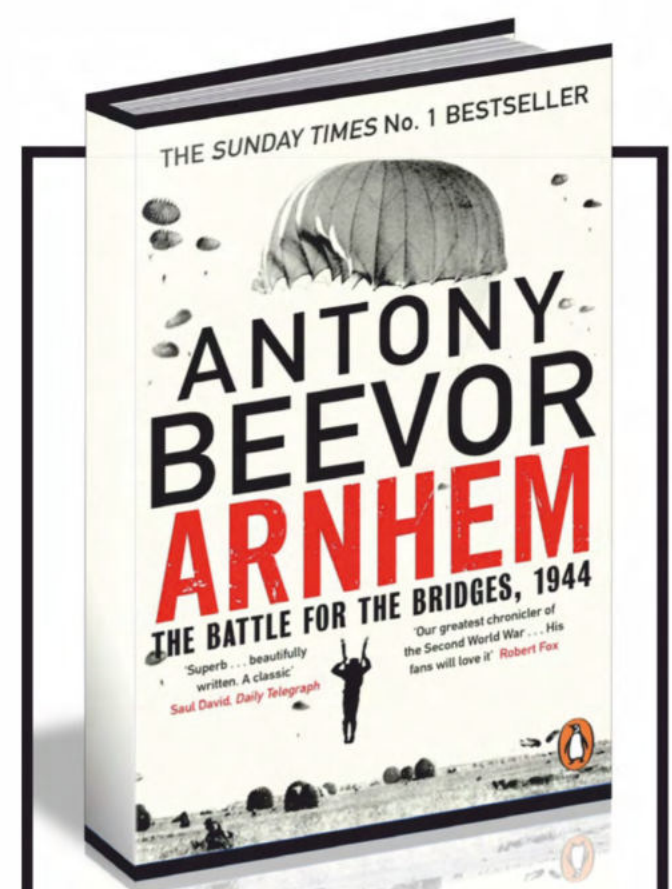
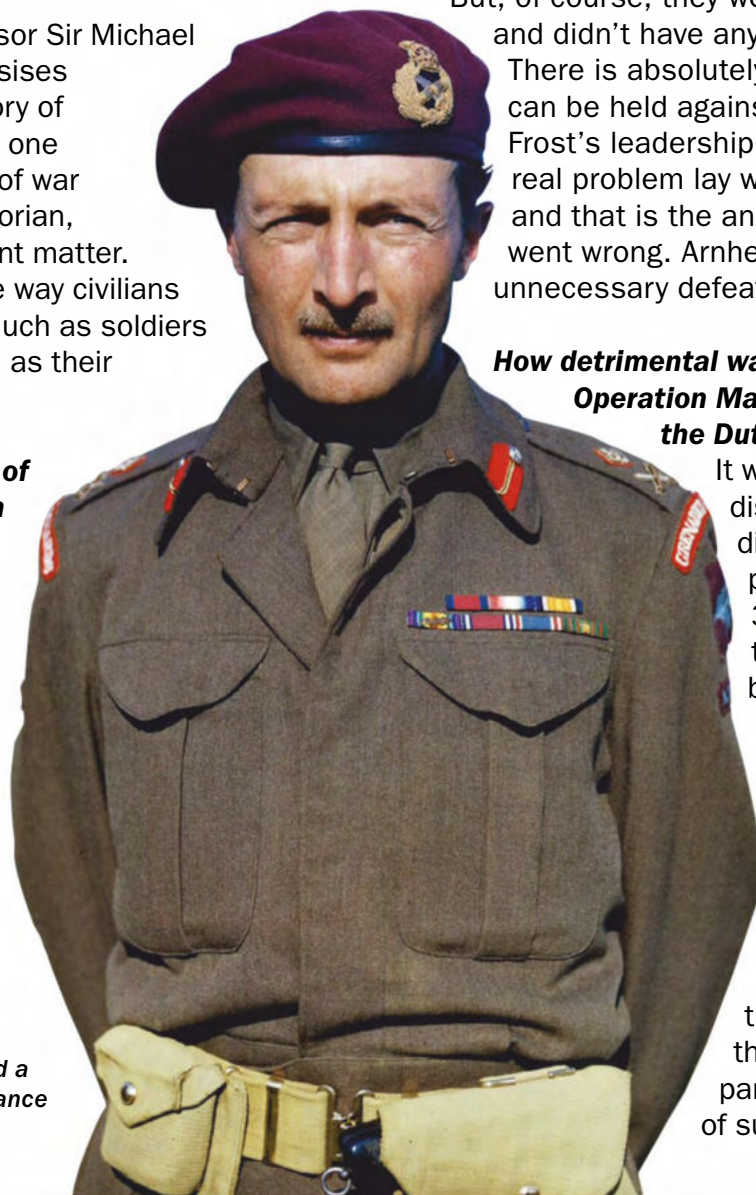
had gone out with their farm carts to help transport supplies and young teenagers had even dug trenches for paratroopers. They did anything to help and the women would pull the wounded into their houses to tend them. They did this even though the Germans would deliberately shoot them down in the street because they were regarded as traitors for having helped the British.

The Germans took their revenge afterwards by cutting off supplies to the major cities during the winter of 1944-45, which became known as the ‘Hunger Winter’. It's quite astonishing and wonderful that the Dutch are so incredibly kind and generous to the veterans who go back and are welcomed. Considering all they suffered as a result of the disaster, they show gratitude for the attempt to liberate them.

They don't in any way rub it in that they suffered probably more than the British soldiers as a result of its failure. They had much to forgive and they certainly did forgive.

#### **Despite being a disaster, is Arnhem's famous place in British military history justified?**

It's justified from the point of view of the bravery. That is certainly true but I don't think it's justified from the effect of the battle – far from it. The trouble is that the reason why Arnhem has become such an, I hate to use the word, ‘iconic’ battle in the British mentality is because the British do have a certain fascination with heroic failure. Let's face it, Arnhem is one of the largest examples of that and maybe that says something about the British character. It's quite revealing.



*Arnhem: The Battle For The Bridges, 1944* is published by Penguin Random House and is available to buy at: [www.penguin.co.uk](http://www.penguin.co.uk). Antony Beevor will be speaking about Operation Market Garden as part of the Chelsea History Festival at the National Army Museum on Wednesday 9 October 2019.

For more information and to book tickets visit: [www.chelseahistoryfestival.com](http://www.chelseahistoryfestival.com)

CHELSEA  
HISTORY  
FESTIVAL

TO READ ANTONY BEEVOR'S UNABRIDGED INTERVIEW, INCLUDING AN ANALYSIS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR'S ENDURING LEGACY, VISIT: [WWW.HISTORYANSWERS.CO.UK](http://WWW.HISTORYANSWERS.CO.UK)



# MALVERN FESTIVAL OF MILITARY HISTORY 2019

FRIDAY 25 – SUNDAY 27 OCTOBER

The UK's only literary festival dedicated to military history is back, with another fantastic lineup of expert speakers

Last year *History of War*'s very own Tom Garner was privileged to speak with the late Paddy Ashdown, who discussed his book *Nein! Standing up to Hitler* before a gripped audience at the inaugural Malvern Festival of Military History. The *History of War* team is delighted to once again be partnering with the festival, which this year is once more proving to be an essential event for passionate history buffs everywhere! Among the incredible itinerary of speakers you can see this October are: Peter Snow and Ann MacMillan,



Professor Gary Sheffield, recent *History of War* contributors Roger Moorhouse and Damien Lewis, Dr Peter Caddick-Adams, Maj Gen Mungo Melvin and many more.

As well as speaker events, there will also be panel discussions, audience Q&As, exhibits, book signing sessions and evening entertainment. All events will be held within the stunning premises of Malvern College, Worcestershire, which dates back to 1865. The festival is taking place from Friday 25 – Sunday 27 October with tickets available from £25.

**“AN ESSENTIAL EVENT FOR PASSIONATE HISTORY BUFFS EVERYWHERE!”**

## 2019 KEYNOTE SPEAKER HIGHLIGHTS:



### DAMIEN LEWIS

A former war and conflict reporter for over 20 years, Damien is now a bestselling author and a world renowned expert on the history of elite military operations. Back again after his popular talk in 2018, this year he will be discussing his latest book, *SAS Italian Job*, which recounts the epic Special Forces mission behind the Gothic Line in the winter of 1944.



### ROGER MOORHOUSE

Roger is among the world's leading authorities on Nazi Germany, Central Europe and World War II in Europe, with published works including *The Devils' Alliance* (Bodley Head, 2014) and *The Third Reich In 100 Objects* (Greenhill, 2017). On 27 October he will be discussing his latest book *First To Fight* (Bodley Head, 2019).



### ANNABEL VENNING

Annabel is a journalist, writer and regular contributor to the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail* and *The Times*. Her first book, *Following The Drum* (Headline, 2005) recalls the story of the women who supported the British Army across four centuries. At Malvern she will discuss her latest book, *To War With The Walkers* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2019).

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON TICKETS, SPEAKERS AND TRAVEL, PLEASE VISIT:  
**WWW.ENLIGHTENMENTEVENTS.COM**



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Above: This pictured gas rattle was used by Lieutenant J. T. Colledge of the Royal Horse Guards c.1918

German soldiers taking advantage of a suitable wind to emit poison gas from cylinders

# WWI GAS RATTLE

Soldiers on both sides of the First World War used these wooden devices to warn of a suspected chemical weapon attack

**D**uring WWI, poisonous gases were released silently from cylinders or quietly discharged from exploding gas artillery shells. To counter this new and sinister threat, various devices were used to warn soldiers such of a chemical attack. Low maintenance alarms could be large, empty cartridge cases that acted like bells or gongs. They could be installed at regular intervals in frontline trenches and sounded if a gas attack was suspected.

Spreading the alarm further behind in communication or rear trenches required

louder devices and methods. Soldiers could bang bayonets on their helmets but this risked exposing their heads to fire and gas. Air horns and bells were also used but they could not be easily sounded by marching troops and were not easily portable.

The solution was the introduction of the 'Gas Rattle'. Similar in design to ones used by policemen, the rattle was a hand-operated ratchet device that made a distinctively sharp and loud clacking noise when turned rapidly. Lightweight, portable and inexpensive to manufacture, the rattle became a commonplace local alarm that was reasonably

effective. It enabled troops to quickly put on their protective gas equipment, such as hoods and respirators. However, the rattle had to be sounded before the soldiers were first exposed to gas otherwise their protection would be ineffective.

Apart from its distinctive sound gas rattles had another, distinctly unofficial, wartime use. Primarily made out of wood, they often went missing in trenches where dry kindling for cooking fires was often in short supply. After the war ended, rattles subsequently became popular among football fans that used them as a noisemaker to cheer on their teams.

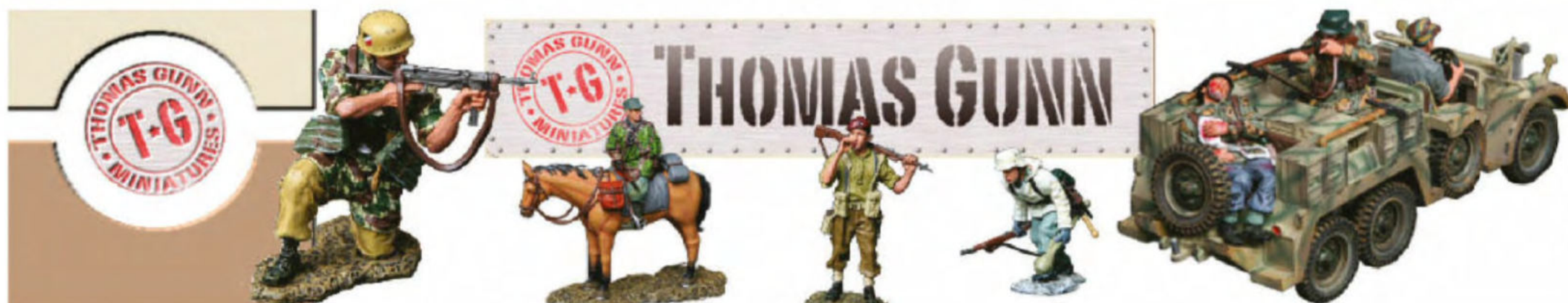
**"GAS RATTLES HAD ANOTHER, DISTINCTLY UNOFFICIAL, WARTIME USE. PRIMARILY MADE OUT OF WOOD, THEY OFTEN WENT MISSING IN TRENCHES WHERE DRY KINDLING FOR COOKING FIRES WAS OFTEN IN SHORT SUPPLY"**

NATIONAL  
**ARMY**  
MUSEUM

The gas rattle is held in the collections of the National Army Museum in Chelsea, London.

For more information visit: [nam.ac.uk](http://nam.ac.uk)





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